

MARTIAL AND CHIVALRIC SYMBOLISM IN SPENSER'S

"THE FAERIE QUEENE"

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# ABSTRACT OF THESIS (Regulation 6.9)

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It is my thesis that Spenser uses the symbolism of combat, heraldry, and chivalry in The Faerie Queene on a scale and in ways not hitherto recognised in criticism of the poem. This symbolism, which I demonstrate was widely known and used in Renaissance England, is of classical, medieval, and Renaissance origin. It is found in The Faerie Queene in relation to armour worn and weapons used, heraldic devices, battles, tournaments, and wounds, and to the orders and institutions of knighthood. I suggest that Spenser uses martial and chivalric symbolism in the expression of both his moral and his political allegory and that narrative events such as battles and tournaments are thus far more closely related to his central themes than has previously been allowed.

The first three chapters consider groups of objects or actions and their symbolism in the poem, such as the shield, various weapons, the knight's overall armour, and battles. In the fourth chapter I discuss specifically the overwhelmingly Christian, and thus anomalous, martial symbolism of Book One. In Chapters Five and Six I concentrate on chivalry and the symbolism of the institutions of knighthood, centring each chapter in a study of one of the tournaments of The Faerie Queene.





DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation, in its research and composition, is entirely my own work.

25 March 1981

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## PREFACE

In the preparation of this dissertation I have received the help and encouragement of many people. Specific indebtedness is recorded in the footnotes, but I should like to thank particularly Professor John Dixon Hunt and Dr Peter Armour, both of London University, for more extensive aid. My greatest debt, however, is to Professor Alastair Fowler, whose patience, interest, and rigorous supervision have been of the utmost help. All faults, needless to say, are the responsibility of the author.

Translations are my own, unless otherwise stated. In the case of Virgil, I have based my translations on the Loeb Classics edition, but have emended silently to achieve greater fidelity to the Latin where I have thought it necessary.

Unless otherwise stated, spelling and punctuation in all quotations is as in the edition cited, with the exceptions that "i/j" and "u/v" have been normalised and that common contractions and abbreviations have been silently expanded.

## ABBREVIATIONS

References to the books of the Bible employ the standard abbreviations.

BL:	British Library
BM:	British Museum
<u>EETS:</u>	<u>Early English Text Society</u>
<u>HLQ:</u>	<u>Huntington Library Quarterly</u>
<u>JEGP:</u>	<u>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</u>
<u>JWCI:</u>	<u>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</u>
<u>MLN:</u>	<u>Modern Language Notes</u>
<u>MLR:</u>	<u>Modern Language Review</u>
<u>MP:</u>	<u>Modern Philology</u>
NY:	New York
<u>N&amp;Q:</u>	<u>Notes and Queries</u>
<u>OED:</u>	<u>Oxford English Dictionary</u>
OUP:	Oxford University Press
<u>PMLA:</u>	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</u>
<u>PQ:</u>	<u>Philological Quarterly</u>
<u>PUP:</u>	Princeton University Press
<u>RES:</u>	<u>Review of English Studies</u>
<u>SEL:</u>	<u>Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900</u>
<u>SP:</u>	<u>Studies in Philology</u>
<u>UTQ:</u>	<u>University of Toronto Quarterly</u>
UP:	University Press

## INTRODUCTION

### i

The purpose of this dissertation is to consider a feature of The Faerie Queene hitherto largely unstudied. This feature is Spenser's use of the tradition whereby the actions and equipment of a knight are given symbolic functions. My thesis is that Spenser uses this "martial and chivalric symbolism", as I have called it, throughout his poem.

My title implies that this kind of symbolism can be subdivided into two parts. The first is that composed of the symbolism of armour, weapons, and battles drawn on by Spenser to contribute generally to the expression of his allegory: for instance, in the first chapter I argue that the shields of Prince Arthur, Britomart, and Sir Arthegall develop our understanding of the virtues of which these figures are patron; and that they also convey the interrelation of the various figures and of their virtues.

These martial symbols - shields and their devices, weapons and the blows struck with them, the complete armour of the knight - constitute a group because of their connection with combat, not because they are associated with any single theme or set of ideas. However the second group of symbols is that

made up of those specifically identified with chivalry and used by Spenser to express what I take to be a chivalric theme in The Faerie Queene.<sup>1</sup> My discussion of this latter group will propose the existence of allusions to the institution of knighthood (and particularly to the Order of the Garter) by means of chivalric symbolism in Books Three, Four, and Five of the poem.

In its use of martial and chivalric symbolism Spenser's poem employs a traditional mode of expression which existed both in antiquity and in Elizabethan England and which had its place in daily life as well as in literature. As we shall see, Spenser's sources include epic literature and he draws on Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso. Equally prominent is the Bible. But Spenser also derives material from non-literary sources, particularly the political, social, and legal symbolism of his own day.

Although this thesis is not revolutionary it implies a reassessment of elements of The Faerie Queene which have perhaps been passed over as insignificant in the past. In the course of the dissertation I hope to establish the need to attend to and interpret these martial and chivalric elements if we are to achieve a

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1. The two groups are not, of course, exclusive. It will be seen that in certain contexts the general martial symbols take on specific chivalric meanings.



fuller understanding of the poem.

ii

Despite the critical advances of the past twenty years, the martial and chivalric nature of The Faerie Queene has not been coherently studied.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed critical commentary on the battles and warriors of the poem is comparatively rare. For every mention of Satyrane and Marinell's tournaments, the principal chivalric episodes of the poem, there are a host of articles on the Temple of Venus and the Garden of Adonis. And in particular any symbolic meaning contained in these martial passages has gone largely unremarked. This is not due to any lack of interest in the iconography of The Faerie Queene: the works of such scholars as Rosemond Tuve, Alastair Fowler, and Paul Alpers have alerted us to the far more pervasive and profound incidence of symbolic expression in the poem than had hitherto been suspected, even though we may disagree with some of their specific interpretations.<sup>3</sup> And of more recent contributions, James

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2. The starting-point for the current Renaissance of Spenser studies would seem to be A.C. Hamilton's The Structure of Allegory in "The Faerie Queene" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961). Behind this, however, lie the seminal and stimulating works of C.S. Lewis.

3. Particularly in their respective books, Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity (Princeton: P.U.P., 1966); Spenser and the Numbers of Time (Routledge, 1964); and The Poetry of "The  
/Continued over

Nohrnberg's monumental commentary, The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene" (Princeton: P.U.P., 1976), has proposed ever more labyrinthine complexities. But despite the lead of these scholars, little attention has been given to symbolism in the martial episodes of the poem.

One might expect more of that school of criticism aiming to pay close attention to the surface of The Faerie Queene. These critics advocate, with A.C. Hamilton, the study of "Spenser's art of language", the immediate, verbal expression of the poem.<sup>4</sup> As a result of their labours we now have a far wittier Spenser than that bequeathed to us by the Romantics and the Victorians. Between these groups there is, of course, no necessary conflict (indeed they are by no means as discrete as this summary suggests). Jane Aptekar, an iconographical critic, describes Spenser as "metaphysical"; but her Spenser is just as witty in the manipulation of his symbols as of his words, a side to the poet shown us by such scholars as René Graziani.<sup>5</sup>

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Footnote 3 continued from page 3.

Faerie Queene" (Princeton: P.U.P., 1967). These three writers have each made significant contributions to the understanding of martial symbolism in the poem.

4. The Faerie Queene, ed. A.C. Hamilton (Longman, 1977), p. vii.

5. Jane Aptekar, Icons of Justice: Iconographic and Thematic Imagery in Book Five of "The Faerie Queene" (New York: Columbia U.P., 1969), p. 3. Graziani demonstrates Spenser's witty adaptation of Philip II's  
/continued over

In outlining his approach, Hamilton contends that "interpretation may be controlled and refined by reading the words more carefully in context".<sup>6</sup> But surprisingly, the context of Spenser's words has not included his poem's apparent genre.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps it has been thought too obvious to devote much attention to The Faerie Queene's status as a work of chivalric literature. Certainly, in all the discussions of verbal and symbolic wit and of allegorical, theological, and philosophical subtleties, the knights and their battles have been left very much alone. Our growing awareness of The Faerie Queene's debts to and connections with the classics and the European Renaissance has possibly rendered us less receptive to its apparently more medieval features: we are unwilling to turn from the clear vision of the Graces to the confusing, if not confused "Knights and Ladies gentle deeds" (I. Proem. 1.5) of which Spenser undertakes to sing.<sup>8</sup>

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Footnote 5 continued from page 4.

Apollo impresa in "Philip II's impresa and Spenser's Souldan", JWCI 27 (1964), pp. 322-24.

6. "Our new poet: Spenser 'well of English undefyld'" in A Theatre for Spenserians, eds. Judith M. Kennedy and James A. Reither (Toronto: Toronto U.P., 1973), p. 103.
7. John Arthos's book, On the Poetry of Spenser and the Form of the Romances (Allen and Unwin, 1956), now seems a rather superficial approach to this subject.
8. All quotations from The Faerie Queene are taken from The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al., 9 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932-49), hereafter cited as Var, unless otherwise stated.

A common feature of both the critical schools I have mentioned is that they tend to avoid any discussion of passages portraying or describing martial action in The Faerie Queene. Modern scholarship has found its most fertile pastures to lie in the close analysis of near-static, tableau-like scenes. This approach has yielded impressive results, revealing many qualities hitherto unseen. But it has also led us into the peril of seeing only the static in the poem; and that in acute isolation. Paul Alpers's The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene" is the most extreme work to arise from this tendency. He divides the poem into stanzas and even lines of such independence as to deny any narrative, action, and drama to the poem. But however beneficial locally, this approach ignores aspects of The Faerie Queene which our responses as readers confirm to be present. Alpers's partial view is betrayed by an analysis of the examples with which he supports his case. He discusses the Cave of Mammon in Book Two; but like many other critics completely ignores the context of this adventure.<sup>9</sup> The presence, past and future, of the pagan brothers Pyrochles and Cymochles is not mentioned. More revealing still is his account of Book Four, which

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9. The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene", pp. 235-75. Frank Kermode, another of the seminal writers on this passage, also ignores the framing incidents involving Pyrochles and Cymochles, in "The Cave of Mammon", Stratford on Avon Studies 2 (1960), pp. 151-73.

omits any reference to the second, fourth, seventh, and ninth cantos, thus eliminating most of the action of the book. In particular the important narrative events of the two tournaments receive barely a mention.

### iii

The denial of narrative, action, and drama in The Faerie Queene is the exaggeration of a good point: the slower, more static scenes are frequently crucial. But this should not prevent our recognising the significance of other sections of the poem, sections likely, given the type of narrative, to be martial. T.K. Dunseath has also noted the scant attention given to such events as battles and his own studies lead him to oppose the consensus view:

the neglected battles are every bit as important to the argument of the poem, and an understanding of them is essential. In these seemingly insignificant and endless Iliads, what seems occasional metaphor becomes ... an elaborate poetic order in which every image contributes to the progress of the argument. 10

Although Dunseath's claim is excessive in its absoluteness, his general point is correct. Some of the martial scenes embody arguments integral to the poem. Others, like the Red Cross Knight's combats with Errour

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10. Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book Five of "The Faerie Queene", (Princeton: P.U.P., 1968), pp. 32-33.

and the Dragon and the tournaments of Books Four and Five, provide the essential encapsulation and resolution of some of the poem's principal themes.

In studying The Faerie Queene we should remember the counsel of E.H. Gombrich, who agrees with D.E. Hirsch in stressing "that the intended meaning of a work can only be established once we have decided what category or genre of literature the work in question was intended to belong to".<sup>11</sup> The genre of The Faerie Queene has perhaps been lost sight of in recent years. It comes into the same category as Orlando furioso, Rinaldo, and Gerusalemme liberata: a chivalric epic-romance. To be sure, each of these works is very different from the others in important ways. Nevertheless they are similar in that they utilize a chivalric setting and martial activities. In writing this dissertation I have gone back to this first stage in interpretation and tried to understand what use, if any, Spenser makes of the symbolic language that came to him with the genre.

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11. Symbolic Images (1972; 2nd edn., Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1978), p. 5; citing D.E. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (1967). In general, of course, this comment begs the question of conscious genre theory in earlier periods. But in Spenser's case the Letter to Raleigh is sufficient evidence of Spenser's awareness of his poem's place within a genre.



The bias in some modern studies of The Faerie Queene against the poem's martial passages and characteristics is perhaps counterbalanced by a growing understanding of the intellectual and artistic climate of Elizabethan England. This understanding has been fostered by such scholars as Frances Yates, Roy C. Strong, and Stephen Orgel, who have taken us a considerable way to comprehending the strange and eclectic world in which Spenser wrote.<sup>12</sup> Their works have concentrated on explicating the visual and poetic arts of the period and particularly on the courtly masques, pageants, and tournaments which combined literature and spectacle.

Of equal and largely unrecognised value to Spenser studies have been the pioneering examinations of the new knowledge available in the late sixteenth century. Stuart Piggott and, above all, T.D. Kendrick have revealed the significance of the development of

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12. Yates's most pertinent essays are collected in Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century (Routledge, 1975); Strong's in The Cult of Elizabeth (Thames and Hudson, 1977), which continues many of the themes of his earlier Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); and Stephen Orgel's works include The Jonsonian Masque (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard U.P., 1965), The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance (Berkeley: California U.P., 1975), and, with Strong, Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Jacobean Court (Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1973).

antiquarianism and historiography in England.<sup>13</sup>

- . Kendrick places Spenser firmly among the adventurous and exciting scholars of the time, in the company of such as Camden, Speed, and Selden, men who were exploring Britain's own history and culture at the same time as Spenser was interpreting these poetically.<sup>14</sup> Kendrick and others can reveal for us more clearly than before the potential and the attraction of the new "matter of Britain" for the sixteenth-century poet, teaching us that contemporary interest in the nation's past was not confined to politics, but embraced the anthropological, linguistic, and chivalric history of the islands.

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In the following chapters I do not attempt a comprehensive survey of all the instances on which martial and chivalric symbolism is used in The Faerie

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13. Stuart Piggott, Ruins in a Landscape: Essays in Antiquarianism (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P., 1976); and T.D. Kendrick, British Antiquity (Methuen, 1950), especially his remarks on Spenser, pp. 126-32.
14. The value of relating The Faerie Queene to this context is suggested by a comparison of Spenser's interests and the divisions of Camden's Remaines ... Concerning Brittain (1605): the title-page specifies that the book will include discussion of "the inhabitants thereof, their Languages, Names, Surnames, Empreses, Wise Speeches, Poesies, and Epitaphs".



Queene. Rather I have selected examples which appear to me to convey most successfully the scope and uses of this symbolism. In the first three chapters I discuss the meanings attached to the armour, weapons, and martial actions of knights throughout the poem. In Chapter Four I concentrate on the martial symbolism of Book One, isolating this book because of its widespread use of material drawn exclusively from the Scriptures and other Christian sources. Chapters Five and Six turn specifically to chivalric symbolism, and each has as its focal point one of the poem's two tournaments. At these, I suggest, chivalric symbolism is pervasive; and comprehension of it essential to an understanding of Spenser's meaning.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SHIELD

#### Section One: Prince Arthur's Shield

##### i

"The shelde", writes Gerard Legh, "is gyven to the knight to sygnefye the office of a knight".<sup>1</sup> Legh succinctly places the shield at the heart of chivalric symbolism, as the emblem of knighthood itself. His emphasis was common; in the sixteenth century, the shield and its device were widely used in all those areas of life in which display was required. With an established tradition and a developed taste and understanding among his readers, the shield was entirely suitable for Spenser as a means of expression, and in this chapter I shall discuss the uses to which it is put in The Faerie Queene. Some shields, such as those of Sans foy and his brothers in Book One, can be read with comparative ease (although even in these cases exact interpretation is difficult given the cryptic quality of the devices); but I shall show Spenser using the subtle arts of reference and allusion in the shields of more

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1. The Accedens of Armorie (1576), sig. eii<sup>v</sup>.

prominent and complex figures, particularly Prince Arthur, Britomart, and Arthegall, to contribute to the unity of his poem, and to relate these figures to the themes, moral and political, of The Faerie Queene.

Spenser's period abounds in examples of shields used symbolically to convey complex meanings. As the principal form taken by the coat-of-arms the shield was central to the art of heraldry. As such it appeared in symbolic contexts with extraordinary frequency, and in particular with reference to the monarch. In 1588, Elizabeth I embellished the landing stage at Greenwich with shields held by four royal beasts. These shields reminded the onlooker of the queen's political and dynastic claims: her royal ancestry; her Welsh forebears and the connection with King Arthur; her alliances with various noble houses; and above all the political unity and stability achieved by the Tudors, represented by the Tudor double-rose.<sup>2</sup> When these four beasts, along with six others, reappeared at Westminster Abbey in 1953 to greet Queen Elizabeth II for her coronation, they served largely decorative purposes, to the extent that they were not allowed to be painted in their correct and essential colours because these would not harmonize with the blackened Abbey.<sup>3</sup>

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2. See H. Stanford London, Royal Beasts (East Knoyle: Heraldry Society, 1956), p. 7.

3. London, p. 2.

But in 1588 their symbolic function was very much alive. And we shall find Spenser alluding to Elizabeth I's personal, political, and dynastic associations through shields and emblems in the same way.

Coexisting with this traditional role for the shield was the newer use of tournament shields which did not employ standard heraldry. Witty, learned, and totally unsuitable for battle, these fabrications were purely symbolic. Their splendidly abstruse charges are well represented by those collected in Camden's Remaines (1605) many of which are thought to have been used in the Accession Day Tournaments held on November 17 each year to celebrate Elizabeth I's reign.<sup>4</sup> These tournaments were occasions for personal display, rather than dynastic identification, and their devices tend to be of the impresa type. The shields reflect courtly compliment of Elizabeth as an individual (albeit as an individual monarch) rather than as the representative of English kingship in abstract, as can be seen from these examples:

He referred Fate, Fortune and all to his  
Soveraign which drew for himselfe the twelve  
houses of heaven, in the forme which Astro-  
logians use, setting downe neither Signe nor  
Planet therein, but onely placing over it  
this word, DISPONE.

The like reference had he which onely  
used a white shield, and therein written,  
FATUM INSCRIBAT ELIZA.

It may bee doubtfull whether hee affected  
his Soveraigne, or justice more zealously,

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4. See Frances Yates, Astraea, p. 107.

which made a man hovering in the aire, with  
FEROR AD ASTRAEAM. (p. 169)

None of these examples has any connection with traditional heraldry. And Camden makes it clear that these emblems are to be read by means of the references they contain. The reader of The Faerie Queene recognizes some of the same mythological and astrological references thought to underpin the imagery and iconography of Book Five.<sup>5</sup> It is also noticeable that these imprese draw on a wider range of sources, including classical mythology and astrology, than the heraldic shields, which mainly employ medieval chivalric symbolism.

Both kinds of shield-symbolism influence sixteenth-century literature. Perhaps the most famous example is the New Arcadia in which, Frances Yates and others have suggested, some of the details of Elizabethan tournaments in which Sidney took part may be reflected.<sup>6</sup> Be that as it may, learned significance and

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5. See, for instance, Yates, Astraea, pp. 69-72; Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, Chapter 12; and Jane Aptekar, Icons of Justice, Chapter 2.
  6. Astraea, pp. 88-94; James Holly Hanford and Sara Ruth Watson, "Personal Allegory in the Arcadia: Philisides and Lelius", MP 32 (1934), pp. 1-10; D. Coulman, "'Spotted to be known'", JWCI 20 (1957), pp. 179-80; and Katherine Duncan-Jones's two articles, "Nashe and Sidney: The Tournament in The Unfortunate Traveller", MLR 63 (1968), pp. 3-6 and "Sidney's Personal Imprese", JWCI 33 (1970), pp. 321-24.

outrageous unrealism combine in both literature and life to produce the energetic jeux d'esprit characteristic of the age, culminating in the hilarious anarchy of the tournament in The Unfortunate Traveller.<sup>7</sup> However, in both art and reality tournament shield symbolism has its serious side. Marlowe relies on popular knowledge of such matters when, in an anachronistic tournament, Edward II demands to see the witty imprese devised by his barons, only to be confronted by emblems representing his disgrace and their threatened revolt.<sup>8</sup>

Edward's eagerness to see the shields and their striking quality are reflections of contemporary tournaments. We may surmise that Spenser's audience was capable of understanding and was even expecting the complex uses to which shield and device are put in The Faerie Queene. His early readers would have enjoyed, as we barely can, the references to the arts of impresa and blazon central to their own pageantry and display. Drawing on contemporary usage, interest, and knowledge, Spenser can achieve highly concentrated expression. And through the shields of The Faerie Queene he develops and expounds his moral and political themes.

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7. Thomas Nashe, The Unfortunate Traveller in The Works of Thomas Nashe, ed. R.B. McKerrow, 5 vols. (1904; revised reprint, Oxford: Blackwell, 1958). Vol. 2, pp. 271-79.

8. Edward II II.ii.11-28; see also Pericles II.ii.14-58.

Having emphasized the significance of the device, it may seem perverse to begin by considering Prince Arthur's shield, which is blank and normally covered by a veil. Yet Camden's selection includes a contemporary instance in which blankness is used expressively. Reasons why Spenser chooses a blank shield for Arthur involve not only his presentation as an individual character, but also the organization and structure of the poem.

Both Spenser and the bearer of the blank shield in Camden's list draw on the medieval tradition in which a young knight, before he proved himself, bore a shield without device. Thus Sir Gawain is given arms of a single colour when he exchanges clothing with a young knight:

Then were brought the arms of Helain ... and the shield was completely blank as it was new, as it was the custom at that time that new knights bore a shield of one tincture alone for the first year they were knights. 9

The time limit of a year is more specific than is usual in the Romances, these arms being retained until the

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9. Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, ed. H. Oskar Sommer, 7 Vols (1910). Vol. 3, Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, Part 1, p. 299:

Lors furent apportes les armes helain ... et li escus tous blans comme nois. si comme a chel tans estoit coustume. que chevaliers nouiax portoit escu dun seul taint le premier an que il lestoit.



performance of some notable deed. And in the New Arcadia also, Sidney uses this tradition when he describes "a great nobleman of Corinth, whose device was to come without any device, all in white like a new knight (as indeed he was)".<sup>10</sup>

Spenser's hero is also at the outset of his career, as the poet tells us in the Letter to Raleigh:

after his long education by Timon ...  
[having] seene in a dream or vision the Faery  
Queen, with whose excellent beauty ravished,  
he awaking resolved to seeke her out, and so  
being by Merlin armed, and by Timon throughly  
instructed, he went to seeke her forth in  
Faerye land. 11

The newness of both knight and armour is stressed. Arthur himself tells Una and the Red Cross Knight that he embarked on his adventures "in freshest flowre of youthly yeares, / When courage first does creepe in manly chest" (I.ix.9.1-2). Conventionally, the love of a mistress has taken the young man from his "looser life" (I.ix.12.6) and set him on the pursuit of honour and love.

The newness of Arthur, insufficiently recognised by the critics, links him with the Red Cross Knight in the initiating trials of the first book. As well as distinguishing the poem's Prince from the King

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10. The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, ed. Maurice Evans (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 354-55. Hereafter referred to as the New Arcadia.

11. Var, Vol. 1, p. 168.



Arthur of legend, this newness suggests that the young "gentleman or noble person" is to identify in part with the Prince in his education in "vertuous and gentle discipline" (Var, Vol. 1, p. 167). The Prince's inexperience and immaturity are conveyed by the blank shield, a clean slate in a sense. In the course of the poem, the reader will be instructed in the meaning of the virtues; and gradually, the meaning of Arthur's all-inclusive magnificence will become apparent.

The bearing of a blank shield implied no lack of dignity. Writers of romance did not demand quarterings with the rigour of Madame la Baronne de Thunder-ten-tronckh.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, the simplicity of a shield was taken, in retrospect, to be a sign of honour and antiquity. In times when heraldry was becoming ever more complex, the imagined simplicity of former ages was associated with unblemished chivalry and national success. Geoffrey of Monmouth tells us,

For at that time was Britain exalted unto so high a pitch of dignity as that it did surpass all other kingdoms in plenty of riches, in luxury of adornment, and in the courteous wit of them that dwelt therein. Whatsoever knight in the land was of renown for his prowess did wear his clothes and his arms all

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12. Voltaire, Candide in Romans et Contes, ed. René Groos (Paris: Gallimard, 1954). Candide's supposed father was infra dig, "parce qu'il n'avait pu prouver que soixante et onze quartiers", p. 149.

of one same colour. 13

The late sixteenth century was an age of highly developed heraldry with which Arthur's blank shield would have contrasted sharply. The difference would have imparted a sense of other-worldly antiquity and simple honour to its bearer.

### iii

As well as drawing on common heraldic knowledge, Spenser relies on our recognition of his literary sources in the description of Arthur's shield. Chief among these is the shield of Atlante in the Orlando furioso, and the connections between these two shields have been studied at length by Paul Alpers.<sup>14</sup> However it is the shield's difference from this and other analogues that interests us here. It was early recognised that whereas Atlante's shield is made of carbuncle, Spenser informs us that Arthur's is composed of "Diamond perfect pure and cleene" (I.vii.33.5). This alteration was noted by D.C. Allen; but his

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13. Geoffrey of Monmouth, History of the Kings of Britain, tr. Sebastian Evans (1912; revised, Dent, 1963), pp. 201-202. See also Gerard J. Brualt, Early Blazon: Heraldic Terminology in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries with Special Reference to Arthurian Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 29-30.

14. The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene", pp. 168-79.

rigorous interpretation of the shield as symbolising repentance (following an occasional allegorisation of the diamond in renaissance lapidary works) seems too limited in the context of this poem.<sup>15</sup> Some earlier critics, perhaps as a result of drawing on the cruder manifestations of the renaissance love of allegory, were excessively concerned to discover detailed, precise moral allegories. This tendency is perhaps comparable with the problems of historical allegory, which suffers from over-rigorous equations with Spenser's contemporaries. In both fields, Spenser's allegory operates by temporary and suggestive associations, rather than rigid and permanent identifications.

Allen's error lies in assuming that, because the Red Cross Knight's shield is connected in the Letter to Raleigh with the "shield of faith" of the Epistle to the Ephesians, so Arthur's must be equally specific and yet different. However, everything we know concerning Arthur suggests that he is less different from the other knights than superior to them. So much is conveyed in the inevitable comparison between the Prince's shield and that of the Red Cross Knight; a deliberate comparison, one feels, because they are the only two described at any length in Book One and appear in similar

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15. "Arthur's Diamond Shield in the Faerie Queene", JEGP 36 (1937), pp. 234-43.

positions at the beginning of each half of the book.<sup>16</sup>

The Red Cross Knight bears a

silver shielde,  
Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,  
The cruell markes of many' a bloudy fielde  
(I.i.1.2-4)

Perhaps to point the comparison, the neologism "dint" (as the result of the blow rather than the blow itself) recurs in the description of Prince Arthur's shield, although there in its normal sense after an initial ambiguity. Spenser contrasts the obviously embattled shield of the Christian soldier with that of his rescuer, whose shield was

Hewen out of Adamant rocke with engines keene,  
That point of speare it never percen could,  
Ne dint of direfull sword divide the substance  
would.  
(I.vii.33.7-9)

Arthur's impregnable shield transcends the heroic vulnerability of the Red Cross Knight's. The comparison between the two shields reveals not only the relationship between these knights but also their profound difference.

The distance between them is nowhere clearer than in the rescue of the Red Cross Knight. Whereas the Knight falls to Duessa and Orgoglio, Arthur is able to defeat them in circumstances strongly reminiscent of

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16. The Red Cross Knight enters the poem with Una and the Dwarf at I.i; Prince Arthur enters exactly six cantos later at I.vii, when he meets Una and the Dwarf.

the Harrowing of Hell. The Prince's Christ-like role should not surprise us after the description of his arms, for his diamond shield has, as its primary symbolic significance, Christ. Valeriano, for instance, writes of adamas:

this is set down concerning Christ: "Truly, from the Father to the earth was sent the unique, divine, heavenly, and incorruptible Diamond, only begotten God, of whom God the Father says: 'Behold I place a Diamond in the midst of my people, whom neither the fire of temptation in the wilderness will weaken, nor the blows, scourging, and wounds of the wicked on the cross will weaken or make less, whom neither burial nor descent into the underworld will be able to harm in the slightest, but he will certainly overcome all and prove a divine and incorruptible Diamond'". 17

Arthur's diamond shield is superior to that of the Red Cross Knight as Christ is superior to the Christian soldier. Spenser may be suggesting that Arthur is associated with Christ in his initial lines on the shield, where the insistent negative applied to "earthly mettals" places diamond in the heavenly sphere:

Not made of steele, nor of enduring bras,  
Such earthly mettals soone consumed bene:

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J.P.

17. Valeriano Bolzoni, Hieroglyphica (Basle, 1575),  
f. 306<sup>r</sup>:

Mox illa de christo subjecit: "Sic namque et singularis et divinus, coelestis atque incorruptibilis Adamas unigenitus Deus a patre ad terras missus, de quo dicit Deus Pater: Ecce ego pona Adamantem in medio populi mei, quem neque ignis tentationum in deserto comminuet, quem ictus, verbera plagaeque impiorum in cruce non atterent comminuentue, quem neque sepultura, neque descensus ad inferos vel minimum violare poterunt, sed enim omnia superabit, seque divinum et incorruptabilem probabit Adamantem".



But all of Diamond perfect pure and cleene  
It framed was

(I.vii.33.3-6)

The perfection and purity of the diamond, and its superiority, apply equally to the shield's bearer and his virtue.

Other aspects of the symbolism of the diamond, such as fortitude, have been suggested in the discussion of Arthur's shield. Although no doubt apt, these suggestions add little to our understanding of the Prince's role in the poem. However, referring again to the shield of Atlante in the Orlando furioso, Fornari, Ariosto's commentator, occasionally interprets this shield as divine grace.<sup>18</sup> Spenser's alteration of the substance from carbuncle to diamond makes this connection more definite, because the diamond was frequently associated with grace in the Renaissance, as in Picinelli's account of adamas:

Thus although great men shine by natural gifts, by no means however do they shed around great light as much as when they receive at the same time the rays of divine grace, which make greater their splendor. 19

The association of diamond and divine grace is

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18. The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene", p. 166f.

19. D. Filippo Picinelli, Mundus Symbolicus (1681), p. 682:

Ita viri magni etsi naturalibus splendeant donis, numquam tamen majorem sibi circumponunt splendorem, quam ubi gratiae Divinae radios simul excipiunt, iisque claritatem suam adaugent.



The immediate renaissance prototype, Atlante's shield, was capable of blinding the onlooker, but not of petrifying. Spenser has overgone Ariosto by returning to the latter's source, the shield of Minerva, for this further capability. And in doing so he suggests the superiority of his hero and armour to those of one of the most popular of renaissance epics. This superiority is also to be found in the pervasive religious and moral concentration of The Faerie Queene, in comparison with the shifting perspectives and intermittent allegory of the Orlando furioso.

The moral intensity of The Faerie Queene is further emphasised by Arthur's shield's proving even more powerful than the mythological original. Minerva's shield could petrify; Arthur's can annihilate. The difference is significant: it indicates the altogether more absolute power of the Christian's weapons, not only to kill but to destroy opponents entirely. In the overthrow of the Souldan this sense of infinite, menacing power is revealed, in the terror of the horses and the final dispersal of the Souldan's body. All that is left of him is his empty armour and his usefulness as "an eternall token" (V.viii.44.4) of the operation of divine justice. Arthur takes,

Onely his shield and armour, which there lay,  
Though nothing whole, but all to brusd and  
broken, ...

So on a tree, before the Tyrants dore,  
He caused them be hung in all mens sight;



To be a monument for evermore.

(V.viii.44.1-2; 45.1-3)

Although Arthur's shield achieves the absolute disintegration of the Souldan by different means, the effect is that specified in the original description. And the manner and tone of his death confirm the rigour implied in the comparison with the shields of Atlante and Minerva.

The relationship between Minerva's shield and Arthur's resides not only in their powers but also in their physical characteristics. Hers was diamond or crystal, and, before the addition of the Gorgon's head, blank. Enid Welsford describes a tournament of 1509 "in which certain knights, scholars of Pallas ... were headed by a Goddess bearing a crystal shield".<sup>21</sup> Minerva and her shield are shown in Mantegna's "Wisdom leading the Virtues against the Vices" and here she performs a role similar to that of Prince Arthur in The Faerie Queene, as the leader of the warriors of virtue.

Allegorisations of Minerva's shield lend weight to the interpretation of Arthur's as symbolising divine intervention in human affairs. Natalis Comes, for instance, comments on the lending of Minerva's shield to Perseus:

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21. The Court Masque (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1927), p. 123. I am indebted to Professor Alastair Fowler for this reference.

This, the escaping of the Gorgons's attack and the beheading of Medusa whom no-one might even look upon freely, conceals how all human prudence through itself is feeble without God's aid; without which it is not sufficient to shun the inducements of pleasure: and in fact, to be a good man is the gift of God. 22

And elsewhere Comes comments,

for unless we are provided with precepts from heaven and God's aid to us, scarcely any reason can govern the inducements of pleasure. 23

The frailty of man in the battle with the forces of evil characterises the episodes in which Prince Arthur appears in the first two books. This is obvious in the first; in the second, Arthur protects the body of Guyon from Pyrochles and Cymochles. When Arthur's spear, his only weapon, is rendered useless, the shield emerges as his only protection until the Palmer gives him Guyon's sword. In this episode, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three, Arthur's shield functions in the same way as Minerva's does in Comes's

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22. Natalis Comitum Mythologiae, sive explicationum fabularum, Libri decem (Paris, 1583), p. 811:

Hic fingitur Deorum ope Gorgonum impetum evasisse, Medusamque obtruncasse, quam neque intueri quidem ulli licebat: quia omnis humana prudentia per se debilis est sine Dei auxilio sine quo voluptatem illecebras effugere non satis possumus: est enim et hoc ipsum, esse virum bonum, Dei munus.

23. Comes, p. 746:

nam nisi divinitus praeceptis instruamur, nobisque Deus auxilio sit, vix ulla ratione a voluptatum illecebris temperare possumus.

allegorisation: it is the defence against the forces of passion and pleasure, symbolised by the two brothers. At the beginning of this episode, the protection which man receives from evil is asserted to be a manifestation of God's compassion and aid; and this applies to Arthur's defeat of the Pagan brothers as well as to the Cupid-like angel who stands guard over Guyon's body. The Palmer's prayer to Arthur, asking for his protection for Guyon, repeats two significant words from the introductory stanzas on the compassion of God: "succour" (II.viii.2.2; 25.7) and "grace" (1.5; 25.6). We have already seen the association of both these ideas with Prince Arthur's shield.

v

Discussion of the traditional associations of the Minervan shield must include the Perseus legend. Arthur's encounter with Orgoglio in the first book of The Faerie Queene has several parallels with the defeat of the Gorgon by Perseus, the shield and the decapitation of the loser being but two. Almost inevitably, Perseus was allegorised in Christian terms; and, as the son of Zeus miraculously conceived by Danae, he was equally inevitably seen as a figure of Christ. For our purposes the most interesting reading of the legend is found in the Ovide Moralisé, which comments,

when the Son of God, at his own volition,  
 descended from heaven to the earth ... it was  
 he who despoiled the three daughters of  
 Phorces [the Gorgons] of their rule by force;  
 these were the daughters of the devil. ...  
 The first was pride, the other avarice, and  
 the third carnal delight. 24

The allegorisation of the three Gorgon sisters follows the standard division of the totality of sin into three categories, the world (avarice), the flesh (carnal delight), and the devil (pride). Patrick Cullen has attempted to demonstrate the uses of this division in the first two books of The Faerie Queene, notably in the Red Cross Knight's battle with the Dragon and Guyon's journey through the Cave of Mammon.<sup>25</sup> But Cullen fails to note a larger-scale application in the very ordering of the first three books of the poem. In Book One, Prince Arthur confronts pride (Orgoglio / orgeulz), using the Minervan shield and decapitating the

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24. Ovide Moralisé, ed. C. de Boer, 5 vols. (Paris, 1915-38). Vol. 2 (1920), pp. 132-33:

Quant li filz Dieu, par son plesir,  
 Fu descendus dou ciel en terre...

C'est cil qui de lor regne a force  
 Despoulla les trois filles Phorces,  
 Ce sont les filles au diable,  
 Le roi cruell, le roi doutable ...

La premeraine  
 Fu orguelz, et l'autre avarice,  
 Et la tierce charnel delice. (IV. 5825-45).

25. See Infernal Triad: The Flesh, the World, and the Devil in Spenser and Milton (Princeton: P.U.P., 1974), Chapter One; and "Guyon microchristus: The Cave of Mammon reexamined", ELH 37 (1970), pp. 153-74.

defeated giant, and this is strikingly similar to the Ovide Moralisé's version of the Perseus legend. In Book Two Guyon's principal enemy is Mammon, whose realm is pervaded by the considerations of the world and whose initial description vividly suggests avarice.<sup>26</sup> Finally, throughout the third book, Britomart encounters lust in its myriad forms. Extending through the first three books, the three-fold division of sin forms a structure for the first instalment of The Faerie Queene. As Cullen suggests, Spenser uses this division because it "comprised all temptations faced by the First Adam, by the Second Adam, and by all men".<sup>27</sup> Its use as a larger structure for the first three books is initiated by Prince Arthur's use of his shield to defeat Orgoglio, which alludes to Perseus's use of Minerva's shield to defeat the Gorgon, "Orgeulz".

## vi

Arthur's role in initiating the structure suggested above corresponds with the overall function he is assigned in the Letter to Raleigh: "So in the person of

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26. Although I identify Book Two and Mammon with the temptations of the World, I do not mean to rule out Cullen's suggestion that there is a three-fold structure within this episode as well.

27. "Guyon microchristus", p. 156.



Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence in particular, which vertue for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and conteineth in it them all" (Var, Vol. 1, p. 168). The inclusiveness and supremacy of the Prince is reflected in the relationship between his shield and those of the first three knights-patron.

Two figures in The Faerie Queene are related to Minerva.<sup>28</sup> The first is Prince Arthur, who is associated with the goddess through his shield and baldric. The latter has at its centre,

one pretious stone  
Of wondrous worth, and eke of wondrous might,  
Shapt like a Ladies head, exceeding shone,  
Like Hesperus emongst the lesser lights,  
And strove for to amaze the weaker sights;  
(I.vii.30.1-5)

The position of the stone, in the centre of Arthur's chest, and its power to "amaze the weaker sights", recall the traditional use of Medusa's head, as the centrepiece of Minerva's aegis. We recognize Arthur's "Ladies head" not as Medusa but as Gloriana. The implied comparison between the two would seem unflattering until we remembered the legend in which Medusa was famous for her beauty, and was envied by the goddess.<sup>29</sup> The allusion then becomes complimentary to

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28. I do not include, for the moment, the shadowy figure Sir Paladine.

29. This is, of course, the version found in Ovid's Metamorphoses IV. 790ff.

Gloriana or Elizabeth and thus resembles the frequent comparisons of the queen with mythological beauties, such as in the painting at Windsor Castle in which she is compared, through a variation on the Judgement of Paris, with Juno, Venus, and Minerva. Not surprisingly the comparison is favourable to her.<sup>30</sup> Like Medusa, it is Gloriana's beauty that has the power to amaze.

The other traditional position of the Gorgon's head, on Minerva's shield, is that which is used for the poem's other Minervan figure. As Alastair Fowler has shown, both the events of Book Three and the descriptions of Britomart herself have a definite Minervan flavour.<sup>31</sup> On one occasion she is explicitly likened to the goddess:

Like as Minerva, being late returnd  
From slaughter of the Giaunts conquered; ...  
Hath loosd her helmet from her lofty hed,  
And her Gorgonian shield gins to untye  
From her left arme, to rest in glorious victorie.  
(III.ix.22.1-2; 7-9)

The simile works in many ways. But one point at which these figures do not correspond is in their magical weaponry. Although Britomart has the spear associated with Minerva, her shield possesses none of the qualities or powers of the "Gorgonian shield". As will be seen

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30. See Strong, Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, p. 79.

31. Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 122-32.



later in this chapter, the symbolism of Britomart's shield operates in different ways. But Arthur's shield does possess these physical qualities, and both possesses and exceeds the powers. The various links between Arthur and Britomart have been noted by several critics. To these we may now add a common use of Minervan iconography, in ways which qualify and elucidate the relationship between them. As Arthur's shield exceeds the power of the goddess's, so Arthur the supreme hero exceeds the virtue of the patroness of Chastity.

To appreciate the connections between Arthur's shield and those of the other two knights-patron of the first instalment of The Faerie Queene, it is necessary to move from the realms of myth to those of legend. One of the remarkable features of the description of Spenser's Prince is the minimal use made of material taken from descriptions of the legendary King Arthur. The only detail resembling King Arthur's arms is the Prince's dragon-crest; and, as I shall argue in the following chapter, that probably derives from elsewhere as well. Nowhere is the abandonment of the traditional heraldry of King Arthur more evident than in the Prince's shield. Nowhere in my experience is King Arthur said to possess a blank or diamond shield. And, vice versa, King Arthur's various devices are never used by Spenser's Prince. But although Prince Arthur seems to have few traditionally Arthurian connections, two of the

emblems closely associated with the legends of King Arthur and the Round Table do appear on the shields of other figures.

Firstly, the Red Cross Knight's shield can be seen to have a possible Arthurian origin. In the sixteenth century, Gerard Legh reports that King Arthur was thought to have borne the red cross shield of St. George, just as Spenser's Knight does.<sup>32</sup> A further Arthurian link is that Sir Galahad, in the Tale of the Sank Greal, bears a similar red cross shield. It is perhaps this emblem that has prevented the recognition that the powers and features of Galahad's shield are strikingly reminiscent of Prince Arthur's. In the Tale, Galahad is told that this shield once belonged to King Evelake; and when the king

was in the batayle there was a clothe sette  
afore the shylde, and whan he was in the  
grettist perell he lett put away the cloth,  
and than hys enemyes saw a vigoure of a man  
on the crosse, wherethorow they all were  
discomfite. 33

The device on the shield is similar to the Red Cross Knight's. But the power of the shield to dismay opponents, and particularly the unveiling of the shield only in extremis resemble Prince Arthur's:

His warlike shield all closely cover'd was ...

32. Accedens of Armory (1562), fol. 47<sup>v</sup>.

33. The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. Eugene Vinaver, 3 vols (1947; revised edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967). Vol. 2, p. 880.

The same to wight he never wont disclose,  
 But when as monsters huge he would dismay,  
 Or daunt unequall armies of his foes,  
 Or when the flying heavens he would affray;  
 (I.vii.33.1; 34.1-4)

Prince Arthur only reveals his terrifying shield at moments of the greatest danger, and this action is always the turning point of the battle. Its effect is exactly that of King Evelake's. Orgoglio sees it first in the poem and is immediately drained of his capacity to fight:

                                  for he has read his end  
 In that bright shield, and all their forces  
   spend  
 Themselves in vaine: for since that  
   glauncing sight,  
 He ~~both~~ no powre to hurt, nor to defend;  
   (I.viii.21.4-7)

As in the case of the Minervan shield, Spenser has divided the allusion. Here, although the Red Cross Knight's shield has the same device as Galahad's, Prince Arthur's has the covering and the divine powers. Through this division, Spenser paradoxically connects the overall hero of The Faerie Queene, Prince Arthur, with the local hero of Book One, the Red Cross Knight.

Secondly, the shield of the following hero, Sir Guyon, also has Arthurian connections. The Red Cross Knight describes Guyon's device, which is,

                          that faire image of that heavenly Mayd,  
 That decks and armes your shield with faire  
   defence:  
   (II.i.28.7-8)

Later in the second book we are told that the "heavenly Mayd" is none other than the Faery Queen herself; in

other words, a similar image to that borne by Prince Arthur on his baldric. The two are already being linked through their emblems. But at this stage in the opening canto of the second book Spenser does not explain the identity of the figure; he allows us instead to believe that Guyon's shield bears an image of the greatest "heavenly Mayd", the Virgin Mary. Such a shield is again thought to have been used by King Arthur. Camden writes that,

the victorious Arthur bare our Ladie in his shield, which I do the rather remember, for that Nennius, who lived not long after recordeth the same. 34

Elias Ashmole, virtually quoting Nennius, confirms this:

King Arthur himself is reported to bear a Shield called Pridwen, whereon was painted the Image of the blessed Virgin. 35

The connection between the Virgin Mary and Queen Elizabeth was one that trembled on the edge of Elizabethan iconography, to be admitted fully only after her death.<sup>36</sup> We see in Spenser's subtly ambiguous reference all the delicacy required for successful panegyric. The glancing allusion to the Virgin Mary recalls King Arthur's shield Pridwen.

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34. Remaines (1614), p. 178.

35. Institution, Laws and Ceremonies of the Noble Order of the Garter (1672), p. 96.

36. See Strong, Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, pp. 43-44; p. 154.

In each of the three opening books, then, the relationship between the local hero, the knight-patron of that particular book, and the universal hero, Prince Arthur, is expressed in terms of the relationship between the patron's shield and that of the Prince. A further comment should be made. The emblems of the first two knights-patron, the Red Cross Knight and Sir Guyon, are both associated with King Arthur and the institutions that seek to recall him and his glory. Chief among these institutions is the Order of the Garter. The Garter's rituals consciously sought (and still seek) to recreate those of the Round Table. After four centuries of Protestantism, we have forgotten the intense devotion to the Virgin Mary manifested in many facets of English national life. And this devotion to Mary was present in the Order of the Garter. Its patrons were St. George, who was symbolised in the Order's regalia by the red cross; and the Virgin Mary, who was represented in the regalia by an image of her. It is interesting to note that Spenser's poem opens with two books whose knights-patron bear the most common emblems of the Order of the Garter (apart from the garter itself). I shall return to this subject in the fifth and sixth chapters.

## Section Two: Arthegall's Shield

### i

Discussions of Arthegall's shield are beset by one immediate problem: which shield are we to discuss? We never receive a definitive description of Arthegall's shield. Instead we are left with a choice of three. In Book Five he fights using Braggadocchio's sun-like shield; and a strong case has been made for regarding this as Arthegall's principal emblem in that book.<sup>37</sup> In Book Four he fights using the emblem of a Salvage Knight, but only as a disguise as far as the narrative goes. And in Book Three he appears bearing a totally different, carefully described shield. But appears is the word implicitly questioning this shield, because we only see Arthegall in Book Three in Britomart's vision of her future husband in King Ryence's magical mirror. It is with this shield that we are concerned here; but it is necessary to bear in mind the uncertainty of Arthegall's blazon to comprehend its meaning fully.

The vision of Arthegall shows him in full armour:

His crest was covered with a couchant Hound,  
And all his armour seem'd of antique mould,

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37. See Jane Aptekar, Icons of Justice, pp. 77-78.

But wondrous massie and assured sound,  
 And round about yfretted all with gold,  
 In which there written was with cyphers old,  
Achilles armes, which Arthegall did win.  
And on his shield enveloped sevenfold  
 He bore a crowned litle Ermilin,  
 That deckt the azure field with her faire  
   pouldred skin.  
   (III.ii.25)

The description is detailed, especially with regard to the shield. Its sevenfold nature may be explained by the epic convention that heroes often have sevenfold or foursquare shields: the well-armed protagonist should never be without one. It is the blazon that is particularly interesting and initially baffling. T.K.

Dunseath has made an interesting attempt to explain its significance by relating the shield to justice and to Hercules.<sup>38</sup> According to Dunseath, blue as an heraldic colour is "particularly appropriate to the virtue of justice" (p. 58). And he adds that the shield of Hercules, according to Hesiod, had plates of blue enamel. However, he is only able to cite Gerard Legh in favour of this interpretation of blue; and Legh is going against the mass of evidence suggesting that this colour is most closely associated with the symbolism of the sky and the heavens. We need only cite Sir Philip Sidney's comment on blue as an heraldic colour in the New Arcadia, where Phalantus wears armour

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38. T.K. Dunseath, Spenser's Allegory of Justice, pp. 55-58.



"blue like the heavens".<sup>39</sup>

Dunseath's comments on the ermine are also questionable. He states that "it is consistent with Spenser's poetic design that his hero display such an emblem on his shield, as the ermine (any weasel which turns white in winter) is the animal sacred to [Hercules]" (p. 56). Dunseath then gives ample evidence of the weasel's association with Hercules. But this evidence is irrelevant to the central interpretation of the shield. Spenser's animal is heraldic, not zoological, and in heraldry the distinction between an ermine and a weasel is absolute. This is all the more so because the ermine's fur has a distinct place in heraldry whereas the weasel's does not. Although Dunseath may find the leap from mustela erminea to mustela worthy only of a short parenthesis, one doubts whether Spenser's symbolically nicer contemporaries would have agreed.

Dunseath's identification of the "weasel/ermine" (p. 58) with Hercules alone is explained partially by his failure to see the shield in context. His interpretation suits Book Five, the subject of his

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39. New Arcadia, p. 497. At a deeper level, this conflict in interpretation perhaps disappears. In Samuel Daniel's masque The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses (1604), Astraea the goddess of justice is said to be "clad in celestial hue (which best she likes)" (l. 330). See A Book of Masques: In Honour of Allardyce Nicoll, eds. T.J.B. Spencer and S.W. Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1967), p.34.

study, but is worse than redundant in Book Three because it obscures the shield's true meaning. The ermine itself, rather than the transformed weasel, has a long and established tradition as a symbol of purity and chastity. This tradition stems from the legend that the ermine would rather die than soil its coat. Again we may seek corroboration of the currency of this legend from a similar heraldic use in the New Arcadia, in which Clitophon bears "the Ermion [Ermine] with a speech that signified, 'Rather dead than spotted'" (p. 165).

The ermine's presence in the Renaissance as a symbol on banners and shields derives largely from its use in the immensely popular Trionfi of Petrarch:

Hyr vyctoriouse standerde was this:  
In a greene felde a whyte armyne is  
With a chayne of golde about his necke; 40

Although these lines occur in the Triumph of Death, the banner in question is that of Chastity (although we should not lose sight of the wider meaning of purity, to which I shall return).<sup>41</sup> In addition to the ermine,

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40. Lord Morley's "Tryumphes of a Fraunces Petrarcke" ed. D.D. Carnicelli (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard U.P., 1971), "Triumph of Death", ll. 25-27 (p. 117). Petrarch, Rime e Trionfi, ed. Ferdinando Neri (Turin: Unione Tipografica, 1966), p.556:

era la lor vittoriosa insegna  
in campo verde un candido ermellino,  
ch'oro fino e topazi al collo tegna (11.19-21)

41. Strong seems confused on this point, allocating these lines to the "Triumph of Chastity"; see Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, p. 82.

the azure of Arthegall's shield is, as we have remarked, a colour closely associated with heaven and the Virgin Mary. Upton tells us that, in heraldry, azure is symbolic of loyalty, fidelity, and chastity.<sup>42</sup> Taken together, the ermine device and the azure field seem to point towards an interpretation of the shield highly appropriate to Book Three: as symbolic of chastity.

ii

But this does not explain why Arthegall should be bearing such a shield. It would seem more fitting to Britomart. To understand the reasons why this shield is Arthegall's will take us to the heart of some of Spenser's themes in the story of Arthegall and Britomart.

Britomart first sees Arthegall in a magical vision of the future. The normal function of a mirror, to reflect the viewer's image, appears to be unfulfilled. But we may suggest that, in two different ways, Britomart is reflected and that the image in the mirror embodies aspects of her self.

Firstly, her gazing in the mirror and thinking of those things "that mote to her selfe pertaine" (III.ii.22.9) carry the implication that the process of

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42. The Faerie Queene, ed. John Upton (1758), Vol. 2, p. 527.

falling in love involves the recognition of something of one's self in the beloved. This is a very old idea; and in the Romance of the Rose is expressed in terms similar to Spenser's. There, the Lover gazes into a fountain at the bottom of which are two crystal stones. The crystal is described as,

the mirrour perilous,  
In which the proude Narcisus  
Saw all his face fair and bright,  
That made hym sithe to ligge upright.  
For whoso loketh in that mirrour,  
Ther may nothyng ben his socour  
That he ne shall there sen somthing  
That shal hym lede into lovyng. 43  
(11. 1601-1608.

In the Romance, the Lover gazes and sees two reflecting crystals, one suspects his own eyes. In them is reflected the "roser" containing the fateful Rose. In The Faerie Queene, Britomart gazes similarly and sees a knight bearing, in the azure and ermine of his shield, emblems of her own, characteristic virtue. She has indeed seen things "that mote to her selfe pertaine" and fallen in love with the bearer of them.

Secondly, Britomart's quest, as the heroine of Book Three, is for Arthegall. But it is also a quest for chastity. Britomart is seeking the ideal form of the virtue of which she is patron with which to become united. What she sees in the mirror is that

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43. The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson (1933; second edition, O.U.P., 1957), p. 580.

ideal in the person of her future husband bearing the attributes of heavenly chastity. In retrospect we perceive that these emblems may contain meanings taken up in Arthegall's own book, as suggested by Dunseath. But, for the time being, the mirror's image may be read in terms of the quest for chastity and the quest for Britomart's "selfe" in the person of her future husband. In Britomart's search for her reflected but separated self in Arthegall we may see the influence of the Symposium, and Aristophanes's theory of the androgyne (189c-193e). Having seen her other half in the mirror, it is no wonder that she envies (or "halfe" envies) Amoret and Scudamour in the cancelled ending to Book Three, who find each other and form "that faire Hermaphrodite", "growne together quite" (III.xii.46.2; 5 [1590]). They have achieved the union of selves that she is seeking.<sup>44</sup>

In the significance of Arthegall's shield we find the first instance of the complementariness of these two figures. In Britomart's second vision, at Isis Church, we see in effect a mirror image of the

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44. Britomart's "halfe" envy and initial uncertainty as to the cause of her "melancholy" (III.ii.27.9) are also consistent with Aristophanes's theory. The separated lovers are unaware of the cause or nature of their longings; they desire,

something else which the soul of either evidently desires and cannot tell, and of which she has only a dark and doubtful presentiment, (192c-d)

(The Dialogues of Plato, tr. Benjamin Jowett, 4. vols (1868-71; 4th edition, corrected reissue, O.U. P., 1964). Vol. 1, p. 523).





us wary of disregarding Spenser's instruction.

Britomart sees a reflection of her ideal self unfolded in the person of her future husband and his armour. It is possible that this vision refers not only to Britomart, but also to Elizabeth. Bearing in mind that this is a vision of the Arthegall of the future and not the present, it shows an armed knight (we are later to know him to be the patron of justice) bearing the shield of heavenly chastity; the combination expresses just those qualities singled out in the Proem: chastity and rule. Arthegall never achieves the perfection implied here (at least in the poem as we have it); the synthesis of his and Britomart's virtue to which the vision looks forward is left to their progeny. And perhaps we are meant to feel that this synthesis is only achieved in their ultimate offspring, the queen herself.

iv

Support for this interpretation of Arthegall's shield can be found in the iconography of Elizabeth I, particularly in the so-called Ermine Portrait at Hatfield House. This depicts the queen, plainly dressed, holding in her right hand an olive branch, with her left hand touching a table beside a sword. Olive branch and sword probably symbolise peace and justice



respectively. Resting on her left arm is an ermine with a small crown round its neck. This last detail distinguishes the portrait from the general tradition descended from Petrarch, in which the ermine wore a gold collar studded with topaz. Spenser's description of the ermine on Arthegall's shield agrees with the portrait in this detail: his has no collar but is a "crowned litle Ermilin". Both Elizabethan ermines may be an adaptation of Petrarch's image to suit the royal object of praise. The ermine in the portrait joins the other attributes to form an emblematic representation of the qualities of Elizabeth I's reign: justice and peace, political and personal purity. Close attention to the portrait reveals that the colours of the ermine, black and white, predominate, colours which became the queen's personal emblem of her purity in her later days.<sup>45</sup>

The Ermine Portrait is a subtle work. The ermine as a symbol, although derived from the Trionfi in large measure, also had its political significance, as purity in public, as well as private, affairs. Two other queens, Anne, wife of Francis I, and her daughter Claude, wife of Louis XII, used this emblem. So too did John of Gaunt's descendants, the Dukes of Lancaster, who were connected with the Duchy of Brittany. Ashmole

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45. See Strong, Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, p. 21.

explains the use of the ermine emblem as deriving from the creation of the Order of the Ermine by Duke John of Brittany, "by which he made known the greatness of his courage, and rather than fail of his word, that he would undergo any misfortune".<sup>46</sup> The ermine's refusal to stain its fur may obviously be interpreted as implying steadfastness and purity, not only in personal morality, but also in religious and political affairs. As such its presence on Arthegall's shield may contain not only a reference to the Belphoebean chastity of Elizabeth, but also to her Mercillan justice and integrity.

### Section Three: Britomart's Shield

#### i

Britomart enters the poem as an unknown knight, distinguished only by her spear and her shield. The latter "bore a Lion passant in a golden field" (III.i.4.9). Perhaps distinguished is the wrong word: the lion is one of the commonest heraldic beasts in literature. Britomart received the shield as part of the armour hanging in King Ryence's church and which formerly

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46. Ashmole, p. 118.





Illustration 1: The Arms of Brute



Interesting though this suggestion is, Church has only traced half the history of these arms, for Brutus inherited them from the pre-eminent medieval hero, Hector of Troy. His arms are thus described by Benoit de Sainte-Maure:

On his shield was just a lion, but it was  
gules, surrounded by gold; so were his  
emblems, and the ensigns of his lances. 49

These arms are also found in visual representations of Hector as in the tapestry representing his funeral from Tournai, now in the Burrell Collection.<sup>50</sup> In the course of Britomart's adventures the Trojan war and its causes receive farcical retelling in the liaison between Paridell and Hellenore. But the comedy should not blind

49. Roman de Troie, ed. Leopold Constans, 6 Vols (1904-12). Vol. 1 (1904), p. 437:

En son escu n'ot qu'un lion,  
Mais vermeuz fu, d'or environ;  
Autreteus sont ses conoissances  
Et les enseignes de ses lances. (ll. 8065-68).

The heraldry of Hector has been the subject of some discussion, with articles by R.S. Loomis ("The Heraldry of Hector of Confusion Worse Confounded", Speculum 42 (1967), pp. 32-35) and R.A. Dwyer ("The Heraldry of Hector and its Antiquity", JWCI 34 (1971), pp. 325-26). However both these articles are concerned only with Hector's arms as part of the tradition of the Nine Worthies, in which special, confusing features are found. Neither mentions the arms given in the Roman de Troie nor the very interesting arms said to have been Hector's in the Orlando Innamorato (azure, an eagle argent).

50. See Margaret R. Scherer, The Legends of Troy in Art and Literature (New York: Phaidon Press, 1963), pp. 93-94 and plate 76.

us to the more serious themes involved in the Trojan legend, nor to the significant ways in which the Trojan legend underlies The Faerie Queene. During the episode in Malbecco's castle, Britomart reveals her own Trojan ancestry; and as Paridell's debased and falsified version of the legend makes her sincerity more obvious, so his description of his ancestor as the "most famous Worthy of the world" (III.ix.34.1) serves to heighten the true nobility (and true membership of the Nine Worthies) of Hector, whose arms she bears.

Once again, as the reader will have noticed, the discussion has returned to a point of contact between Britomart's arms and those of Arthegall. As her shield derives from Hector's, so he wears,

Achilles armes, which Arthegall did win.  
(III.ii.25.6)

Critical comment on this line has been confused.

Kathleen Williams sees this as the "near identification" of Arthegall and Achilles, whereas Jane Aptekar concludes that "Spenser seems to have had it in mind to associate Artegall with Achilles as well as with Hercules; but the Achilles relationship is not worked through".<sup>51</sup> T.K. Dunseath, also somewhat obsessed with Hercules, suggests the rather laboured contortion, "Achilles' armor here is Spenser's sly reference to

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51. Kathleen Williams, Spenser's "Faerie Queene": The World of Glass (Routledge, 1966), p. 133; and Aptekar, p. 236, n. 12.

the fact that Hercules fought at Troy, and Arthegall is to unite with Britomart, thereby continuing the Trojan line in Britain" (p. 59). Sly indeed. Dunseath is right in bringing in the Trojan destiny, but we must surely reject the reference to Hercules: "Achilles armes" is a reference to Achilles.

ii

In associating these two figures with the adversaries in the most famous of all wars, Spenser is setting up once more the greatest opposition in all epic literature: Hector against Achilles, Troy against Greece. In this, Spenser follows the example of Virgil, who rematched the two heroes in Aeneas and Turnus, initiating a tradition of reworking the legend. Spenser imitates Virgil in allowing the Trojan side to triumph (at least initially), because Arthegall is overcome by Britomart in the tournament for Florimell's girdle. But he ultimately revolutionises the legend's ending: by embodying in a woman the Trojan stock, he makes possible the conclusion of the feud through a marriage alliance, combining the virtues of both sides. There was an element of this in the genealogy of Brutus himself, as Nennius tells us: "According to the annals of the Roman history, the Britons deduce their origin



both from the Greeks and Romans".<sup>52</sup> Spenser, we notice, has the resolution of the feud in Book Four of The Faerie Queene, the book of discordia concors.

The union achieved works not only in terms of the epic tradition, but also in terms of the Tudor dynasty's own history. The offspring of Britomart and Arthegall are to be English sovereigns down to Elizabeth herself. The Tudor dynasty had been safely established as a result of just such a marriage alliance between two warring groups, thus ending the Wars of the Roses. The association was by no means new to Spenser; as Frances Yates puts it, "Closely related to the imperial theme of the Trojan descent of the Tudors is the theme of the united monarchy which they established through joining the houses of York and Lancaster".<sup>53</sup> There is also a suggestion of this in the combination of weapons and armour borne by Britomart. She bears the armour of Angela, the Saxon queen; but she also carries the spear of Bladud, the Briton king. Spenser's innovation lies in the juxtaposition of Britomart and Arthegall, Elizabeth of York and Henry VII, the warring protagonists of Homer's epic, and the feuding monarchs of the tribes of Britain.

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52. Nennius, The History of the Britons in The Works of Gildas and Nennius (1841), p. 7.

53. Yates, Astraea, p. 50.

## iii

Two of the principal attributes mentioned in this chapter have several features in common. Prince Arthur's shield and Britomart's magical mirror are both crystal; both mirror-like; both magical; and both made by Merlin. It may be that they are in some way related.<sup>54</sup>

As we have seen, Britomart's vision presents an emblematic representation of herself and also, perhaps, of Queen Elizabeth's ideal self. The queen is counselled to see herself in mirrors and is also described as the "Mirrour of grace and Majestie divine" (I.Proem.4.2). This latter description suggests the powers of Arthur's shield. The diamond shield, we have seen, is symbolic of grace and divine intercession. A complex of fleeting associations is built up in the poem, from which we may, very tentatively, deduce that the queen's ideal virtues are in some way connected with the Prince's shield. This connection is certainly present in the description of the baldric, which has a portrait of Gloriana in its central stone. If we are correct in seeing an association between the Prince's armour and the Virgin Queen, then we may be able to

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54. I am indebted to Mr J.G. Radcliffe for bringing to my attention the resemblances between these objects.

solve the riddle of the armour and its present whereabouts:

But when he [Arthur] dyde, the Faerie Queene  
it brought  
To Faerie lond, where yet it may be seene, if  
sought.  
(I.vii.36.8-9).

If one knows where to seek this armour of grace and divine intercession, then one will find it: in the queen herself.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ARMOUR

#### Section One: Body-armour

##### i

The charges of shields have always been intended to carry some significance, whether simply by way of identification or in a more complex manner. It is normal, then, for shields to fulfil symbolic functions. But this is by no means obviously true of the rest of the knight's equipment and the question therefore arises of whether we have any justification for regarding body-armour in The Faerie Queene as an active constituent of the poem's symbolic language. This question would be all the more pressing if Spenser could be shown to have another end in view in his descriptions of armour, perhaps the accurate representation of contemporary or carefully archaized armour; the implication of which would be that the requirements of verisimilitude governed the details of armour in The Faerie Queene.

Spenser's forerunners in the depiction of armour in poems often display just this interest and pride in historical accuracy. Irving Linn has shown

how Chaucer, in the Tale of Sir Thopas, employs considerable knowledge of the arming of a knight; and he points to several equally detailed passages in other works of medieval literature.<sup>1</sup> And that Spenser recognised the authenticity of such detail is demonstrated by his invocation, in A View of the Present State of Ireland, of the arming of Sir Thopas to clinch a point concerning the origins of the "Checklaton".<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, the accuracy of the various suits-of-armor in The Faerie Queene has been studied by Allan H. Gilbert, and we may repeat his conclusions:

It would seem that in the equipment of his knights [Spenser] was satisfied with a general suggestion of "antique history" and did not make an attempt to find a norm to which the outward appearance of a cavalier must conform. In other words, there is no indication that he carefully visualized the details in the armor of his heroes; indeed he has less feeling for the niceties of armor than his Italian predecessors in romantic poetry. 3

Gilbert demonstrates that such terms as "plate" and "mail" cannot be read in their technical, literal senses in this poem, but are frequently used as poetic alternatives for "armor" (p. 987).

Although somewhat harshly expressed, Gilbert's main conclusion is essentially correct. Judged for its

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1. Irving Linn, "The Arming of Sir Thopas", MLN 51 (1936), pp. 300-11.

2. Var, Vol. 9, p. 121.

3. Allan H. Gilbert, "Spenserian Armor", PMLA 57 (1942), p. 987.

accuracy, Spenser's armour would suffer at the hands of Tristram Shandy's Uncle Toby as did Parson Yorick's ill-conceived siege-metaphor:

Aye, -- aye, Trim! quoth my uncle Toby,  
shaking his head, -- these are but sorry  
fortifications, Trim. 4

But Spenser, like the unfortunate Parson, is less concerned with martial accuracy than with literary effectiveness. On the one hand, his use of technical vocabulary creates, when required, the temporary illusion of reality. On the other, as I hope to demonstrate, his selection of chivalric detail is frequently motivated by a desire to employ the symbolism of armour. And in such cases, pace Gilbert, there is every "indication that he carefully visualized the details of the armor of his heroes"; but for purposes other than the realistic or the decorative.

Further examination of The Faerie Queene reveals that the same is true of the details of combat. On several occasions the poet praises the size and weight of the equipment used by his characters: such as Arthegall's "wondrous massie" armour (III.ii.25.3) or Satyrane's "huge great speare" (IV.iv.17.2). But contemporary writers on the art of warfare ridiculed the very attributes Spenser stresses. Matthew Sutcliffe

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4. Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman ed. G. Petrie (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 146.



tells a cautionary tale:

The Frenchmen in time past had some ... that were armed, as they saie, de cap en pied at which the Romane souldiers laughed. For that they were unable by reason of the weight of their armes, eyther to strike the enemie, or to defend themselves. Therefore did they hew them downe with billes and pollaxes. 5

Armour such as that used by some of Spenser's knights would have made them prey to every wild man in the woods. Sutcliffe would no doubt have congratulated Guyon on the loss of his "loftie steed with golden sell, / And goodly gorgeous barbes" (II.ii.11.6-7) for,

The barded<sup>6</sup> horsemen both for their heavines, and great charge, I thinke not very needefull. When Lucullus his men were much afraide of Tygranes his barded horses, he willed them to be of good cheere, for that there was more labour in spoyling them being so armed, then in foyling them: they were so unweldy.  
(p. 183)

The fact that his impressive weaponry and armour might be cumbersome and immobilising is irrelevant in Spenser. Guyon's "golden sell", no doubt impossible and unliftable, has symbolic functions that override the demands of realism and verisimilitude.

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5. Matthew Sutcliffe, The Practice, Proceedings, and Lawes of Armes (1593), p. 187.

6. Spenser's form "barbes" is a corruption of that used by Sutcliffe (OED Barb sb<sup>2</sup>). The bards made up the "protective covering for the breast and flanks of a war-horse" (OED Bard sb<sup>1</sup>).



## ii

Before considering some of the individual suits-of-armour in the poem, we should refer to the general properties of the symbolism of armour in The Faerie Queene. This symbolism becomes most evident when Spenser explicitly draws our attention to characteristic actions involving armour: its assumption, retention, and removal.

There are times when this symbolism remains dormant and unenvoked. When Prince Arthur and Sir Guyon, having toured Alma's castle, come to pay court to her damsels, we are never informed that they have disarmed in the meantime. Nonetheless we do not imagine them clanking and squeaking in habergeon and cuirass as they traverse the floor. In Alma's castle, awareness of the continued presence of the suit-of-armour is allowed to fade, because its symbolism is irrelevant.

But at other times and in other places this is not so. Throughout Britomart's adventures, armour is brought to the forefront of our attention, and I shall therefore use her armour as my principal example. First Spenser informs us that at Malecasta's castle,

The Redcrosse Knight was soone disarmed there,  
But the brave Mayd would not disarmed bee,  
(III.i.42.6-7)

Spenser's lines make us aware that we are now to focus on seemingly mundane actions involving armour.

The six knights who earlier opposed the Red Cross Knight also disarm. But Britomart resists all Malecasta's entreaties to remove her inhibiting martial equipment. Only when she retires alone to bed does Britomart,

her selfe despoile,  
And safe commit to her soft feathered nest  
(III.i.58.6-7)

In view of later events, the second line's implication of security is ironic. However, the seed of disquiet is already sowed in the term "despoile", meaning on the surface to remove an outer garment. But in the case of armour "despoile" carries the sense of forcible removal, usually associated with the plundering of the dead and defeated in battle.<sup>7</sup> We realize, perhaps only in retrospect, that Spenser has revitalised this near-dead metaphor in order to undermine the sense of safety and security and to convey the hazard of Britomart's action in disarming.

Interpretation of these lines and the action they describe can be taken further. As a result of her voluntary disarming Britomart is vulnerable and is indeed wounded by Gardante; a wound, we now know, associated with sexual or amorous attraction. This sequence of events suggests more than that Britomart has been smitten by passion. It also implies that her wound is in part self-inflicted: "she gan her selfe

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7. OED, Despoil v3<sup>C</sup>; v2<sup>a</sup>.



And her welpointed weapons did about her  
   dresse.  
   (III.xi.55.5-9)

Resisting the temptation to disarm and sleep, presented in a highly seductive manner, she has good reason to feel that she is "in sickernesse" or "a state or condition of being secure".<sup>9</sup> Spenser's elided form "welpointed" allows a pun, implying that Britomart's weapons have been prudently sharpened as well as retaining the normal sense of being properly equipped. The passage as a whole conveys Britomart's greatly increased self-awareness and thus self-protection.

Finally, Spenser seems to invite us to study the role of her armour in the adventure at Dolon's house. The situation here closely resembles that at Malecasta's castle: both incidents occur at the beginning of a quest for Arthegall and in both places the host mistakes her sex. Dolon imitates Malecasta in entreating Britomart to disarm:

But she ne would undressed be for ought,  
 Ne doffe her armes, though he her much  
   besought.  
   (V.vi.23.4-5)

This time Britomart also refuses to lie in a perilous bed, but maintains her vigil and thus avoids the trap. Lying in such a bed would undoubtedly have carried

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9. OED, Sickerness 3a.

sexual overtones.<sup>10</sup> But her prudence, constancy, and love for Arthegall have now developed sufficiently to prevent her falling into dangers similar to those faced at the beginning of her quest.

### iii

It is obvious that the principal iconographic tradition on which Spenser's symbolic use of armour draws is that in which full armour is an attribute of personified virtue.<sup>11</sup> In other contexts than moral allegory armour may have different significations: it may, for instance, be an attribute of Mars, and thus denote war.<sup>12</sup> But although other associations may be intended occasionally in The Faerie Queene, symbolic armour in this poem is principally connected with the

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10. Compare, for instance, Sir Gareth's temptations and symbolic wounding in his left thigh in The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, Vol. 1, pp. 332-36. That Spenser was aware of this passage and had it in mind whilst composing the story of Britomart is supported by the resemblances between Dame Lyonesse's nocturnal visit to Sir Gareth and that made by Malecasta to Britomart. Both, for example, are dressed in ermine mantles: "dame Lyonesse [came] wrapped in a mantle furred with ermyne" (p. 333); "[Malecasta] with a scarlot mantle covered, / That was with gold and Ermines faire enveloped" (III.i.59.8-9).

11. I omit, until the fourth chapter, the specifically Christian symbolism of armour.

12. See Guy de Tervarent, Attributs et Symbols dans l'Art Profane 1430-1600: Dictionnaire d'un Langage Perdu, 2 Vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1958-64), cols. 33-34.  
and Supplement and Index



inclusive abstraction, virtue.

Armour is frequently used with this meaning in the visual arts of Spenser's period. The opposition between armed Virtue and "loose" Vice is perhaps most clearly seen in the various illustrations of the "Choice of Hercules". Hadrianus Junius (1575) and Geoffrey Whitney (1586) in their popular emblem books both differentiate Virtue and Vice by having the former personification armed.<sup>13</sup> The meaning of the contrast in the clothing of the two figures is mentioned by neither author, testimony to commonness of the allusion. A more polished and consciously artistic version of this subject is that by Gaspar de Crayer (1584), who also uses an armed Virtue, again without annotation. And an explicit acknowledgement of this meaning of armour is found in Alciati's Emblemata (1600), where he states that "the armed girl signifies a wise man arming himself against all perturbations of mind and resisting vices with a strong hand".<sup>14</sup> Finally, to anticipate the discussion of the Christian warrior's arms in Chapter Four, Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder's engraving

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13. Hadrianus Junius, Emblemata (1565; facsimile edn., Scholar Press, 1972), Emblem 44; Geoffrey Whitney, A Choice of Emblemes (1586; facsimile edn., ed. Henry Green, 1867), p. 40. The engraving after Gaspar de Crayer is illustrated in Erwin Panofsky, Hercules am Scheideweg und andere Bildstoffe in der Neueren Kunst (Leipzig: Teubner, 1930), plate 34.

14. P. 105. Quoted in Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, p. 126.

of William of Orange as St George shows the knight fully dressed in the armour of virtue; what is more, the armour is identified as representing the various virtues in the margin (ill. 2).

It is equally clear that the representation of virtue as an armed female must have been related, or thought to be related to representations and interpretations of the goddess Minerva. The latter is often found in the role of leader of the Virtues, engaging in combat with the Vices.<sup>15</sup> Tracing the development of Minerva's interpretation over the period of the Renaissance, Rudolf Wittkower sums up the "literary and pictorial tradition of the Middle Ages" as showing "Minerva in full armour as the warlike defender of wisdom and virtue".<sup>16</sup>

But this quotation introduces a second point. As well as representing virtue in general, Minerva was held to be patroness of more specific qualities; and these are transferred, to some extent, to the armour she wears and to those associated with her in The Faerie Queene. Britomart, as Alastair Fowler has shown,

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15. See Mantegna's Wisdom Overcoming the Vices and Perugino's Combat of Love and Chastity, for example (both illustrated in Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, plates 8 and 9).

16. Rudolf Wittkower, "Transformations of Minerva in Renaissance Imagery", JWCI 2 (1938-39), p. 199.





Illustration 2: William of Orange as St George

possesses many of the goddess's attributes, not least her armour.<sup>17</sup> Of the moral qualities associated with Minerva, Britomart partakes not only of her chastity, but also of her wisdom and prudence. At least, Britomart does so by the end of her quest; and it is in this context that we may understand the nature of Britomart's education in virtue. Her devotion to chastity is rarely, if ever, in doubt. But what she does learn throughout her adventures is the self-awareness and self-possession required to retain intact her chastity and her integrity. And it is this lesson that is represented in her changing responses to the promptings and temptations, from within and without, to remove her armour.

The true test lies in her conduct in Busyrane's castle. One cannot feel here that Britomart is greatly perturbed by the lurid scenes depicted in the tapestries, nor by the pageant she witnesses. Rather, in the gathering of her armoury about her and her drawing "her selfe aside in sickernes", we are aware of the prudent watchfulness, the wise self-possession she now displays, in contrast to her too-ready sense of security in Malecasta's house.

iv

The lessons learnt in the course of

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17. Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 124-26.

Britomart's adventures may help in the difficult task of comprehending the meanings of armour in Book Six.

As A.C. Hamilton has commented, "for no other book does the usual kind of allegorical interpretation seem so entirely inadequate, irrelevant and disposable!"<sup>18</sup> As if deliberately to confirm this, Spenser presents the disarming of characters such as Aladine without the moral condemnation found elsewhere on similar occasions. Aladine is discovered, attacked, and wounded while he and Priscilla are

Joying together in unblam'd delight,  
And him unarm'd, as now he lay on ground.  
(VI.ii.43.3-4)

Unlike the implied openness to lust in the unarmed encounter at Malecasta's house, or the explicit lustfulness of the disarmed Red Cross Knight (I.vii), of Cymochles (II.v), and of Verdant (II.xii), the activities of Aladine and Priscilla are explicitly "unblam'd".

A solution to our difficulties in interpreting disarmings and rearmings in Book Six may be found through study of Calidore's actions at the beginning and end of his sojourn in the pastoral world. Calidore disarms in order to melt into shepherds' life and particularly to render himself acceptable to Pastorella. Finding the shepherdess unimpressed by his courtly accomplishments, "his layes, his loves, his

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18. The Faerie Queene, ed. A.C. Hamilton, p. 621.

lookes" (VI.ix.35.9), he

thought it best  
To chaunge the manner of his loftie looke;  
And doffing his bright armes, himselfe  
address  
In shepherds weed ...  
(VI.ix.36.1-4)

Calidore is successful in his limited aim and Pastorella looks kindly on him. But this success is precarious: as soon as the pastoral world is challenged from outside, his new equipment, "in stead of steelehead speare, a shepherds hooke" (VI.ix.36.5), proves inadequate. The limitations are powerfully and ironically pointed by the kidnapping of Pastorella herself.

Calidore's response to the invasion of the pastoral world takes the form of his rearming. But it is a rearming which constitutes the most subtle and resonant image of courtesy in the poem. He resolves, with Coridon, to rescue Pastorella:

So forth they goe together (God before)  
Both clad in shepherds weeds agreeably,  
And both with shepherds hookes: but Calidore  
Had underneath, him armed privily.  
(VI.xi.36.1-4)

Calidore's dress now combines the emblems of arcadian peace and harmony with the armour of a warrior.

This armour must also be interpreted. Spenser never describes Calidore's equipment, not even his shield. Yet this lack of definition gives his arms, like Prince Arthur's blank shield as described in the previous chapter, a fertile inclusiveness and enables them to partake freely of the developing

meanings attached to martial equipment in the course of The Faerie Queene. Among these meanings, the dominant theme has been that armour represents virtue. And we may interpret Calidore's wearing of armour concealed by "shepheards weed", not as the renunciation of the pastoral ideal, but as indicating the essential grounding in virtue required for the survival of the qualities represented by the attributes of the arcadian.

The image of Calidore as an armed shepherd perfectly expresses courtesy as Spenser perceives it. Courtesy implies a society; but society, since the Fall or, in other terms, the end of the Golden Age, is corrupt. Aladine and Priscilla's error is not lust: their love is innocent, "umblam'd". But they may, perhaps, be censured for imprudence. They have behaved, in the naive gratification of their love and their failure to guard against attack, as though the world had returned to the Ovidian Golden Age, which "without a law, of its own will, kept faith and did the right".<sup>19</sup> In a sense they have misjudged the extent and scope of Arthegall's success, taking it as absolute and implying the return to earth of Astraea. But this achievement is severely limited and entails the enforcement of law

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19. Ovid, Metamorphoses ed. and tr. Frank Justus Miller 2 Vols. (Loeb Classics, 1916; 3rd edn., revised by G.P. Gould, Heineman, 1957), I. 90:

sponte sua, sine lege fidem rectumque  
colebat.



rather than its supersession.

In studying Britomart's career it was noted that her armed virtue included wisdom. It is this prudent wariness that saves her in Dolon's house and Busyrane's castle. Britomart is, latterly, well aware of the pitfalls and perils of the world. In Book Six Calidore also requires an education in this aspect of virtue. He retreats, as Meliboe had before him, from the corrupt outside world, experimenting with the unrestrained freedom and contentment of a separate, innocent pastoral existence. The destruction of the village forces a reassessment of his response to the imperfections of the world. Calidore's solution is to combine, emblematically, the inner virtue, prudence, and integrity symbolised by his armour with the social qualities of courtesy symbolised by the "shepherds weed".

The cut-and-dried distinctions made above are obviously an inadequate formulation of our total response to this book: the subtlety and delicacy of Spenser's achievement in Book Six makes one a clod-hopping Calidore blundering through Colin's vision. Perhaps it is more satisfactory, then, to imitate Calidore and resolve this problem by stressing the essential unity of the theme of this book and the theme of the poem as a whole. Courtesy, in a sense, is not a virtue; it is Virtue in its social manifestation.

Like Holiness at the beginning of The Faerie Queene, it is difficult to restrict this particular virtue to a narrow compass. As Holiness encompasses all the virtues in the religious context, so courtesy does in the context of human society. The emblematic dress of Calidore, the paradoxical armed shepherd able to achieve the paradox of bringing Pastorella to the non-arcadian world, would seem to confirm this.

## v

Our interpretation of armour in The Faerie Queene must then include a Minervan refinement on the simple symbolism of virtue. However the inclusion of prudence and wisdom is to some extent true of the poem as a whole. Set within the archaized and romantic landscapes and narrative of Faeryland are explorations of all-too-timeless human dilemmas. Spenser rarely presents the opposition between good and evil in terms of a clear-cut psychomachia. Rather, despite the limitations of his characterisation judged by novelistic standards, the nature and difficulties of the virtuous life are presented through recognisable and common human situations. Although his readers will never meet Acrasia or Despair in person, the moral problems presented in such figures, and presented through Spenser's art so vividly and compellingly that we are



involved in the moral drama, are accessible to us all. Perhaps one of Spenser's most significant divergences from the simple allegory of abstract virtues is the realisation in his poem of the indispensability of self-awareness and self-possession; in fact the additional quality of prudence necessary to the preservation of every other virtue when the abstract is put to the concrete test. And this extra, ever present virtue is expressed symbolically in the armour his heroes learn always to wear.

## Section Two: Arthur's Armour

### i

It is perhaps surprising that Prince Arthur's armour has received so little attention from the critics of The Faerie Queene and that no sustained attempt has been made to account for its prominence. A few authors have dealt with elements of this suit-of-armour in passing; Kathleen Williams briefly discusses the helmet and her conclusions are largely reiterated by Maurice Evans.<sup>20</sup> More recently James Nohnberg has

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20. Williams, p. 22; and Maurice Evans, Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism: A Commentary on "The Faerie Queene" (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1970), p. 104.



This much has been noted by many critics.

However, there is more to these lines than is normally allowed. As well as introducing such general themes, Spenser may also be making statements about the standing of his central hero in comparison with the heroes of other epics, and in particular with Achilles.

The description of Arthur's perfect, glittering armour recalls details of the combat between Achilles and Hector in the Iliad. When Achilles seeks a vulnerable spot in which to wound his opponent, Homer comments on the integrity of the latter's suit-of-armour. These arms had, of course, previously belonged to Achilles, until Hector had plundered them from Patroclus's body. Achilles looked,

upon his fair flesh to find where it was most  
open to a blow. Now all the rest of his  
flesh was covered by the armour of bronze,  
the goodly armour that he had stripped from  
mighty Patroclus when he slew him. 22

Hector's cap-a-pie armour seems flawless and impenetrable as does Prince Arthur's. But Achilles's new armour is even more extraordinary, as its shining demonstrates:

all around about the bronze flashed like the  
gleam of blazing fire or of the sun as he

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22. Homer, The Iliad, ed. and tr. A.T. Murray (Loeb Classics, 1925), pp. 478-79:

χρόα καλόν, ὅπη εἴξειε μάλιστα.  
τοῦ δὲ καὶ ἄλλο τόσον μὲν ἔχε χρόα χάλκεα  
τεύχεα,  
καλά, τὰ Πάτροκλοιο βίην ἐνάρριξε κατακτά .

riseth.<sup>23</sup>

Spenser's Arthurian armour is, if anything, more amazing still, glittering like "Phoebus brightest ray".

Neither of these resemblances is sufficient to make an allusion definite. They may be no more than the stock images and comparisons of epic. But Spenser describes the baldric Arthur wears in terms which seem more certainly derived from Homer. As he does on several other occasions, Spenser alters the weapon or garment to which an image or simile applies in his source while transferring it to his own poem. In this case the simile travels from Achilles's spear to Arthur's baldric, which bears a central jewel in the shape of a lady's head; and this,

exceeding shone,  
Like Hesperus emongst the lesser lights.  
(I.vii.30.3-4)

Homer describes Achilles's spear in these terms:

As a star goeth forth amid stars in the darkness of night, the star of evening, that is set in heaven as the fairest of all; even so went forth a gleam from the keen spear that Achilles poised in his right hand. 24

23. 22. 134-35:

ἀμφὶ δὲ χαλκὸς δάμπετο εἵκελος αὐγῇ  
ἢ πυρὸς αἰθομένου ἢ ἡελίου ἀνιόντος.

24. 22. 317-20:

οἷος δ' ἀστὴρ εἰσι μετ' ἀστράσι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ  
ἔσπερος, ὅς κ' ἀλλιστος ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσταται ἀστὴρ,  
ὥς αἰχμῆς ἀπελαμπ' εὐήκεος, ἣν ἄρ' Ἀχιλλεύς  
πάλλεν δεξιτερῇ

Like Arthur's baldric, the spear is compared to the other stars in the night sky in order to convey its beauty and superior brightness.

In addition to the suggested verbal allusions, we may note more general resemblances between the armour of Achilles and that of Prince Arthur. Both are made by divine or magical figures, Hephaestus and Merlin respectively. Both include an extraordinary shield. And Hephaestus also provided Achilles with a shining baldric to support his shield (Iliad 18.480). These general resemblances, together with the similarities of phrasing and imagery, suggest that Spenser intends us to see a comparison between Prince Arthur and Achilles.

Such a juxtaposition should come as no surprise to us. In the Letter to Raleigh Spenser had indicated his intention to compare Arthur with the heroes of classical and contemporary epic.<sup>25</sup> But although unsurprised we should not dismiss the advantages and prestige to the poet of a comparison with the paramount epic hero of earlier literature. Spenser exalts both hero and poem by this means. Furthermore, Achilles ultimately performs a role in the Iliad not unlike that of Spenser's Prince Arthur. Homer's hero intervenes decisively to save the nearly-defeated Greeks, rescuing them from Hector and finally killing

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25. Var, Vol. 1, p. 167.

him, the chief threat to a Grecian victory. Spenser takes this interventionist role for Prince Arthur, a role which dominates his appearances in The Faerie Queene almost to the exclusion of all others. On this level, then, the comparison of Prince Arthur with Achilles is both general and pervasive.

A second function of the comparison is to provide another point of contact between Prince Arthur and Sir Arthegall, a connection at the heart of much of the political and moral allegory of Books Three to Five. Arthegall, as well as performing frequently in an Achillean role, wears a suit-of-armour which is explicitly said to have belonged to Achilles: "Achilles armes, which Arthegall did win" (III.ii.25.6). In fact, there is nothing particularly Achillean about these arms; they appear to derive neither from Homer's descriptions, nor from any of the other suit-of-arms given to Achilles by later writers.<sup>26</sup>

But part of Spenser's intention may lie in this discrepancy. The inconsistency here parallels that in the comparison of Britomart's shield with that of Minerva. In the first chapter (Section I.vi.) we saw that although the "martiall Britoness's" shield was explicitly compared with that of the goddess, it was Arthur's shield which was, in fact, Minervan, both in physical resemblance and in its petrifying powers.

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26. Such as the armour worn by Mandricardo in Orlando Innamorato III.i.

And it was suggested that through this split reference to Minerva Britomart and her arms were linked to Prince Arthur. We may now suggest that the same process links Arthegall to the Prince. The former's arms are said to be Achillean in the poem; but the latter's are the arms really derived from the Iliad.

ii

In addition to its relevance to the poem as a whole, Arthur's arms play an integral part in the symbolism of the first book. Kathleen Williams perceptively notes this fact when she comments that "Arthur's dragon [on his crest] is now a part of his strength, Red Crosse's is still to fight" (p. 22). This dragon-crest is described in great detail:

For all the crest a Dragon did enfold  
 With greedie pawes, and over all did spred  
 His golden wings: his dreadfull hideous hed  
 Close couched on the bever, seem'd to throw  
 From flaming mouth bright sparkles fierie red,  
 That suddeine horror to faint harts did show;  
 And scaly tayle was stretcht adowne his backe  
full low.  
(I.vii.31.3-9)

In discussing Prince Arthur's dragon-crest we should be aware of two traditions. Firstly there is the tradition that the legendary King Arthur wore "a helm of gold graven with the semblance of a dragon".<sup>27</sup>

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27. Geoffrey of Monmouth, p. 188.



However we should be cautious in assuming that Spenser's source is Geoffrey of Monmouth or one of his followers. We possess, as did Spenser's own time, a considerable wealth of detail concerning King Arthur's arms, from Geoffrey, Nennius, and the iconography of King Arthur as one of the Worthies. But Spenser, excepting the dragon-crest, appears to use none of this. There is no trace among the attributes of The Faerie Queene's Prince of the spear Ron or the shield with the three crowns, or of Excalibur or any of King Arthur's weapons.

Furthermore, Spenser's description of the helmet seems to derive more from a second tradition, that of Virgil and Tasso. And Spenser seems specifically to allude to the Sultan's dragon-crested helmet in Gerusalemme liberata. However, in considering these allusions, we should be at least as aware of the differences as we are of the similarities.

The Sultan's dragon takes an aggressive stand on his helmet: it "raises itself up on its legs, and spreads its wings, and curves up in an arc its forked tail".<sup>28</sup> This is indeed a ferocious beast. And although Prince Arthur's dragon is also awesome, and

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28. Torquato Tasso, Opere, ed. Bortolo Tommaso Sozzi, 2 vols. (1956; 3rd edition, Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1974). Vol. 1. Gerusalemme liberata 9.25.3-4:

su le sampe s'inalza, e l'ali spande,  
e piega in arco la forcuta coda

its wings are likewise outstretched, its position and posture on the helmet are radically different. This is most noticeable in the line, "his dreadfull hideous hed / Close couched on the bever". The position of the dragon's head is surprising; the beaver, technically the area below the vizor but often used for the vizor itself, is well below the crest of the helmet. Its head, far from being raised to attack, is bent right down, if anything in a defensive position. Similarly, Prince Arthur's dragon has its "scaly tayle ... stretcht adowne his backe full low", contrasting radically with the Sultan's dragon, the tail of which is vitally curled up and forked. Arthur's dragon's tail is enervated, stretching limply down.

These contrasting details allow us to perceive crucial differences between the two helmets. The dragon on the Sultan's crest conveys his evil vigour and power. Prince Arthur's dragon, on the other hand, carries within it auguries of the defeat of the real Dragon at the end of Book One. Kathleen Williams's comment, that these two dragons of the first book are meant to be compared, is surely correct. The defeated and defensive stance of Arthur's "tamed dragon" conveys, as Williams says, its subordination to the Prince, especially when compared with its fellow in Gerusalemme liberata.

The impression of the dragon's submission is



III.705). R.D. Williams, following Servius, has suggested that the epithet "palmosa" may refer to the plant apium. This plant was used on the coins of Selinus, and the crown given to the victor in the games was formed from it.<sup>29</sup> It is possible then that the bunch of "haire" or feathers on Arthur's helmet should be read in part as the Prince's victory wreath suspended over the defeated dragon.

As several critics have remarked, the reference to "an Almond tree" is probably an allusion to "Aaron's budding rod which yielded almonds and so marked him as the chosen priest of the Lord".<sup>30</sup> The allusion would be obviously suitable to Arthur's frequently Christ-like role. But we may perhaps go further by considering the helmet as a whole, instead of as a collection of unrelated parts. Arthur's crest is composed of a dragon, seemingly cowed and defeated. It lies beneath a plume associated with the tree of divine selection and with victory. The combination recalls those images of the Crucifixion which show the Cross or Tree of Victory with the defeated Serpent or dragon at its foot (ill. 3). As a single entity, then, the

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29. The Aeneid of Virgil ed. R.D. Williams, 2 vols. (Macmillan, 1972-73). Vol. 1, p. 330. A.C. Hamilton has arrived at similar conclusions independently (The Faerie Queene, ed. Hamilton, p. 103).

30. The Faerie Queene, ed. Hamilton, p. 103; see also Williams, p. 22; Evans, p. 104.

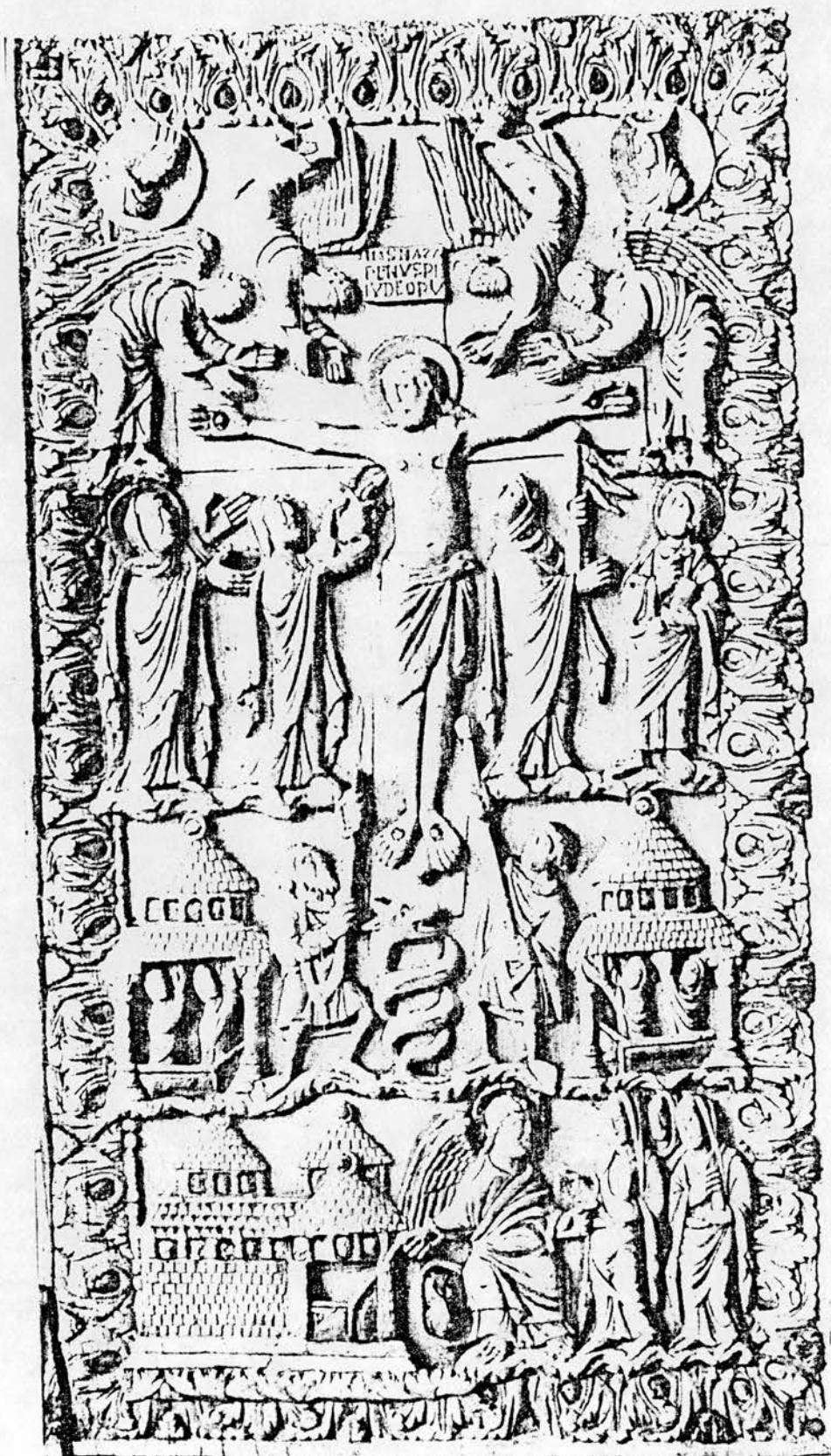


Illustration 3: Crucifixion Scene

helmet expresses Prince Arthur's function in The Faerie Queene as a saviour who is at times closely associated with Christ.

In her illuminating and perceptive comments on this helmet, Kathleen Williams divided the symbolism from the joyful tone of this description:

far more important than the traditional symbolism is the effect inherent in the image, the lightness and life and untroubled joy.  
(p. 22)

We should now reintegrate these two sides of the description. The sense of vitality and gaiety she perceives and conveys so vividly derives from and is generated by the optimistic and prophetic symbolism of man's salvation which the helmet, as a whole, contains.

Until now I have made no attempt to integrate the helmet with the rest of Prince Arthur's armour. One of the most significant functions of this armour is to connect Arthur with Achilles. The dragon-crest is not to be found in the Iliad, nor in any other literary source I have found. But it is the crest given to Achilles in some visual representations of the Trojan legend, as can be seen in Giulio Romano's version of the hero in the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua. And there is a further connection through its presence on the Souldan's helmet, for he is modelled on Turnus, the "apud Achilles" of the Aeneid. As well as its other connotations, then, the dragon-crest may continue the association with Achilles that was found in other



elements of Spenser's description. The helmet then would combine allusions which relate Prince Arthur to both Achilles and Christ, the paramount heroes of the classical and Christian ages.

### Section Three: Arthegall and Britomart

#### i

Description of Prince Arthur's crest leads on to the only other helmet described in detail in the poem. When Arthegall appeared to Britomart in the magical mirror,

His crest was covered with a couchant Hound  
(III.ii.25.1)

The hound has puzzled those critics who have written about it. John Upton attempts to explain its presence by suggesting that it is a reference to Spenser's superior in Ireland, Lord Grey de Wilton:

I formerly said that Arthur Lord Grey de Wilton was imaged in Arthegall, which name corresponds to his Christian name Arthur, and means Arthur's peer [sic] -- The arms here likewise seem devised in allusion to his name Gray: ... For Griseum in the barbrous Latin age signified fine furr or ermine ... The crest likewise of the knight's helmet is a GRAY hound, couchant. 31

The possible reference to a greyhound and the ingenious pun on "gris" would perhaps be more acceptable today were they not connected with so-called "historical allegory". Upton's comment has been largely discounted and is not recorded in recent annotated editions of the poem.<sup>32</sup>

However the possibility of an allusion to Lord Grey may be defended by reference to a similar allusion in the work of one of Spenser's illustrious predecessors. At the beginning of the Divine Comedy, when Dante finds himself in the "selva oscura", he is terrified by three beasts: a Leopard, a Lion, and finally a Wolf. Virgil, who comforts him, explains the meaning of the encounter (at least in part) and predicts the defeat of the Wolf, which has emerged as the most prominent adversary:

Many are the creatures with which she mates  
and there will yet be more, until the  
hound comes that shall bring her to miserable  
death.     33

The identity of this messianic Hound has been discussed

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32. See the notes on this passage in the recent editions by Hamilton (1977) and T.P. Roche (1978).

33. Dante Alighieri, Divine Comedy, ed. and tr. John D. Sinclair, 3 vols. Vol. 1 (1939; revised edition, O.U.P., 1975), p. 27:

Molti son li animali a cui s'ammoglia,  
e piu saranno ancora, infin ch'l Veltro  
verrà, che la farà morir con doglia.  
(Inferno I.100-102)

I am indebted to Dr Peter Armour of Bedford College, London University, for discussing with me Dante and his commentators.

for centuries; but the most persistent suggestion has been that Dante is alluding to the nobleman who was later to become his patron and protector, Cangrande I della Scala. Cangrande, then a young man, was seen as a potential saviour of Italy, the embodiment of the imperial order Dante longed for. Vellutello, one of Dante's earliest commentators, subscribes to this interpretation of the Hound:

Feigning in this to prophesy concerning Can Grande I della Scala, Lord of Verona, through this he speaks of that which was then present: because Dante, in his exile, was greatly aided by this lord in his needs. 34

As in Upton's suggestion concerning Lord Grey de Wilton, the basis of Vellutello's identification is a pun on the name; Cangrande: "cane grande" or "great dog".

Cangrande's family were great users of canting heraldry, "della Scala" being represented in their arms by a ladder; and it is therefore not surprising that the pun on "cane" was frequently used by Cangrande. On his magnificent monument in Verona, his coat-of-arms is held by a greyhound. More interesting still is the equestrian statue of Cangrande surmounting the monument.

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34. Dante con l'espositione di Christophoro Landino, et di Alessandro Vellutello (Venice, 1564), f8r:

Fingendo per quello pronosticar di Cane grande primo della Scala Signor di Verona, e perdere cio che allhora era presente; Perche Dante, nel suo esilio, fu molto souvenuto ne' suoi bisogni da questo Signor.

Ruskin describes it thus:

Above ... [a recumbent figure of Cangrande], a bold arched canopy is sustained by two projecting shafts, and on the pinnacle of its roof is the statue of the knight on his war-horse; his helmet, dragon winged and crested with the dog's head, tossed back behind his shoulders. 35

Cangrande's crest (ill. 4) is a hound, as is Arthegall's in the magical mirror. If Upton is right in his identification of Arthegall with Lord Grey, then Spenser has evolved his hero's crest in a way similar to Dante's allusion to Cangrande, through a pun on the knight's name.

ii

There are further analogies between Sir Arthegall and the enigmatic Hound of the Divine Comedy. Another interpretation of Dante's cryptic prediction places the Hound in precisely the mythological context Spenser gives the patron of his fifth book:

some say that Dante, a great lover of the doctrine of Virgil, wishing to be ambiguous and obscure in this place, imitated this passage of the *Bucolics*, where he says: "Iam redit et virgo redeunt saturnia regna: Iam

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35. John Ruskin, Stones of Venice, 3 vols. (1851-53). Vol. 3, p. 71. For this quotation, and for his aid in tracing illustrations of this monument, I am indebted to Professor John Dixon Hunt of London University.



Illustration 4: Detail of Effigy of Can Grande I della Scala

nova progenies coelo dimittitur alto". 36

This commentator, Christophor Landino, suggests that the Hound represents Christ in his second coming, allegorically the successor to Astraea:

these verses have so much obscurity and are so ambiguous that some have interpreted them as concerning the coming of Christ. 37

At the beginning of Book Five of The Faerie Queene, the book of justice in which judgement is continually present, Spenser makes Arthegall the successor to Astraea:

For Artegall in justice was upbrought  
Even from the cradle of his infancie,  
And all the depth of rightfull doome was taught  
By faire Astraea (V.i.5.1-4)

The coming of Arthegall is set in the context of Virgil's prophecy, the same context which Landino and others thought Dante was referring to in his prophecy of the Hound. Both Arthegall and the Hound have, as a result, something of the status of saviours, as representatives of divine justice.

36. Dante con l'espositione, f8<sup>r</sup>:

i quali dicono, che Dante molto amatore della dottrina di Virgilio, vuole in questo luogo esser ambiguo, e oscuro, a imitatione di quello passo della bucolica, ove egli dice.  
"Iam redit et virgo redeunt saturnia regna:  
Iam nova progenies coelo dimittitur alto".

<sup>ibid.</sup>  
37. Dante con l'espositione, f8<sup>r</sup>:

i quali versi hanno tanta oscurita, e sono si ambigui ch'altri gl'interpreta per l'avenimento di Christo.



## iii

For both the Hound of the Divine Comedy and Sir Arthegall the ultimate foe is a wolf-like beast. James Nohrnberg in The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene" (p. 693) has briefly mentioned the existence of Dante's animal. We may go further and note distinct similarities between the Wolf of the Inferno and the Blatant Beast.

The Hound will finally kill the Wolf after a long chase:

he shall hunt her through every city till he  
has sent her back to Hell whence envy first  
let her loose. 38

The pursuit "per ogni villa" resembles that which Calidore undertakes to capture the Blatant Beast:

who seeking all this while  
That monstrous Beast by finall force to quell,  
Through every place, with restlesse paine  
and toile  
Him follow'd, by the tract of his outrageous  
spoile.  
(Vi.xii.22.6-9; my italics)

In the description of the pursuit and the italicised phrase, Spenser may be alluding to Dante's prophecy.

Furthermore, just as the Wolf was set loose by

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38. Divine Comedy, Vol. 1, p. 29:

Questi la caccerà per ogni villa,  
fin che l'aurà rimessa nello 'nferno,  
là onde invidia prima dipartilla.  
(Inferno I.109-11)

Envy in the Divine Comedy, so the Blatant Beast is set on Arthegall by Detraction and another personification, whose

name was Envie, knowen well thereby  
(V.xii.31.1)

The Wolf and the Blatant Beast have similar origins and are pursued in similar ways. Together with the Astraeon and Virgilian contexts, and the common crest, these resemblances suggest that Spenser's descriptions of Arthegall and the Beast may in part derive from Dante.

iv

The principal result of these similarities is to bring into sharp focus the crucial differences. In the prophecy at the beginning of the Divine Comedy, the Wolf is killed by the Hound and Italy is saved. In The Faerie Queene the converse is true. Arthegall is impotent against the Blatant Beast; and even Calidore only manages to capture it temporarily,

Untill that, whether wicked fate so framed,  
Or fault of men, he broke his yron chaine,  
And got into the world at liberty againe.  
(VI.xii.38.7-9)

Despite the suggestions of a Messiah in Arthegall's role, the Blatant Beast remains at liberty and grows even more powerful.

It is perhaps in these differences that Spenser's intention in alluding to Dante lies. The

resemblances we have noted and Arthegall's Astraean pedigree raise expectations of the return of justice to the world; of a golden age. In the course of Book Five these expectations are mercilessly dashed. Through Virgil's prophecy in the Divine Comedy, Dante allows his desire for the end of disorder and evil to be fulfilled. But Spenser's subject is as much the limitations of human virtue as it is its power for good. Throughout The Faerie Queene, knights-patron reach the climax of their quests only to find that there is yet more to be done. The Red Cross Knight in his wedded joy

nought forgot, how he whilome had sworne,  
In case he could that monstrous beast destroy,  
Unto his Farie Queene backe to returne:  
The which he shortly did, and Una left to mourne.  
(I.xii.41.6-9)

However much the combat with the Dragon seems to represent the final defeat of evil, Spenser deliberately warns us that there is still work to be done. As in his impassioned prayer at the end of the Mutabilitie Cantos (VII.viii.2), Spenser is desperately hoping for the return of Christ and the defeat of evil and mutability. But he seems intent on showing us that in the meantime human virtue is a poor substitute at best.

In the references to Astraea and the Hound, Spenser suggests that the Patron of Justice is to be an omnipotent messianic figure. Within a few stanzas, the mere possibility of the fulfilment of these hopes has

been dashed. This is particularly true if Spenser is alluding to Lord Grey de Wilton in his portrayal of Sir Arthegall. However much Spenser respected and admired him, Lord Grey had manifestly failed. Of course, so did Cangrande della Scala; of his failure, and the barrenness of Dante's prophecy, Spenser may have been aware.<sup>39</sup>

## v

In the first chapter it was suggested that the emblem on Arthegall's shield, the ermine, contained a reference to the dynastic and imperial claims of Elizabeth I. There are grounds for suggesting that the hound on Arthegall's helmet contributes further to this reference and to the historical or political allegory at various points in the poem.

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39. In suggesting some relationship between The Faerie Queene and the Divine Comedy I am, perhaps, going against the prevailing opinion that Dante's works were little regarded in Renaissance England. However, Matthew Tosello, I.M.C., ("Spenser's Silence about Dante", SEL 17 (1977), pp. 59-66) states the case for revising this assessment of Dante's reputation; and in particular he lists probable debts to Dante in Spenser's work. In addition it may be noted that William Drummond of Hawthornden, one of the few poets of the age whose libraries are known to us in detail, possessed a copy of the Divine Comedy and noted in his copy of The Faerie Queene some of Spenser's other unacknowledged Italian borrowings. See The Library of William Drummond of Hawthornden, ed. Robert H. MacDonald (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P., 1971), catalogue entry 1219.

Although the royal arms of Britain and their heraldic supporters have remained largely unchanged for several hundred years, they were hardly constant in the sixteenth century and before. As each dynasty, and each monarch, gained the throne, so their possession was signalled by the incorporation of elements of their personal or familial heraldry into the royal bearings. When the Tudors gained the throne, they brought with them as supporters to their arms the dragon of Cadwallader (to symbolise their connection with the ancient British monarchs) and their family's own symbol, the Tudor or Beaufort greyhound. These two beasts were used extensively by Henry VII: for instance they are the dominant motif on the wrought-iron screen surrounding his tomb in Westminster Abbey. Henry also used them as supporters of his emblem at the head of the tomb (ill. 5).

After his death, other members of the Tudor family continued to use the greyhound, although less frequently. In Elizabeth's reign, two sets of supporters are recorded; the lion and the dragon, and, less commonly, the dragon and the greyhound.<sup>40</sup> In other contexts besides the coat-of-arms, the greyhound appears extensively in Elizabeth's reign; it was, for example, one of the four royal beasts she set up at the

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40. See Boutell's Heraldry, revised by J.P. Brooke-Little (Warne, 1978), p. 212.



Illustration 5: Detail of Tomb of Henry VII



landing stage at Greenwich in 1588.<sup>41</sup>

In the greyhound Arthegall bears as his crest one of the distinguishing emblems of the Tudor dynasty. As an emblem of Elizabeth I the greyhound joins the other details of Arthegall and Britomart's armour which were noted as relating to the Queen in the previous chapter. Taken together the lion, ermine, and greyhound depict the Queen's ideal self through the medium of her imperial, dynastic, and personal emblems. As Britomart's lion suggests the lion of England; and the ermine the Queen's political and personal purity; so the greyhound introduces the Tudor and Beaufort houses of which Elizabeth was the descendant.

vi

Only the crests of Arthur and Arthegall are described in any detail in The Faerie Queene. As well as being related by their names, as Upton and Dunseath have noted, their crests form another link between them. And on one particular occasion, the crests appear to be used in conjunction by Spenser to allude to an aspect of Elizabeth's role as monarch.

When Prince Arthur and Sir Arthegall arrive at the court of Mercilla, they find her sitting amid a

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41. See H. Stanford London, Royal Beasts, p. 2.

plethora of royal symbols. She sits on a throne "all embost with Lyons and with Flourdelice" (V.ix.27.9); in other words, her throne is decorated with the dominant heraldic motives of the kingdoms to which English monarchs laid claim: the lions of England and the lillies of France. In addition, Mercilla bears her sceptre, has by her the sword of state, and the royal lion lies beneath her feet. And immediately they arrive she resumes the role of judge, in order to preside over the trial of Duessa.

Recognising the partial allegory of the trial of Mary Queen of Scots, various critics have suggested that Mercilla's court alludes to some specific branch of the Elizabethan judiciary. Identification of the particular court Spenser had in mind is difficult because of the peculiarities of the description. The monarch had not, of course, actually presided as judge for centuries. In a sense, Spenser is reversing the normal symbolism of the courts, in which the monarch's presence, giving authority to the judge, is suggested iconographically by the royal coat-of-arms. At Duessa's trial, on the other hand, the monarch's real presence symbolises justice and the court.

But which court? Mary Queen of Scots was tried by an ad hoc body of dubious legal status. Several candidates have been put forward including the

supreme court of Parliament.<sup>42</sup> This is possible; but the evidence is not so overwhelming as to produce total acceptance. However, another body seems to be alluded to in Spenser's description of Mercilla's court and its functions:

She was about affaires of common wele,  
Dealing of Justice with indifferent grace,  
And hearing pleas of people meane and base.  
(V.ix.36.3-5; *my italics*)

Spenser's description and phrasing suggest the Court of Common Pleas. This court, which developed as a distinct body from the Court of King's, or Queen's Bench after Magna Carta, differed from the latter in that it dealt specifically with cases in which the Crown was neither prosecutor nor defendant.<sup>43</sup> Its purpose was to adjudicate between citizen and citizen; to hear the "pleas of people meane and base".

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42. See Douglas A. Northrop, "Spenser's Defence of Elizabeth", UTQ 38 (1969), pp. 272-94 and Northrop's second article on the subject, "Mercilla's Court as Parliament", HLQ 36 (1972-73), pp. 153-58.

43. See the entries on the Court of Common Pleas in the Oxford Companion to Law by David M. Walker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); also G.R. Elton, England under the Tudors (1955; second edition, Methuen, 1974), pp. 62-63. For the increasing importance and business of the Common Pleas in the sixteenth century, see A History of English Law by W.S. Holdsworth, 17 vols. (Methuen, 1903-72). Vol. 4 (second edition, 1937), pp. 255-56. For a contemporary view of the function of the Common Pleas, see Camden's Britannia: "the common Pleas hath that name because in it are debated the common Pleas between Subject and Subject, according to our law, which they call common" (p. 178).

Corroboration of the connection between the Court of Common Pleas and Mercilla's court may be found in the iconography of the former and the description of the latter. Mercilla invites Arthur and Arthegall to observe the case and takes them to the throne, where she

placed th'one on th'one,  
The other on the other side, and neare them  
none.  
(V.ix.37.8-9)

Spenser is precise about the position of the Knights, and separates them from anyone else present. They are to either side of Mercilla's throne which, we have already been told, is decorated with elements of Elizabeth's royal coat-of-arms. If we visualise the armour of the knights, and particularly their helmets, we can see that Spenser is further alluding to royal and judicial iconography. Arthur's crest is a dragon and the only crest of Arthegall's we ever hear of is a greyhound. The seal of the Court of Common Pleas is the only judicial seal to incorporate all these elements, and particularly the unusual supporters, the dragon and the greyhound (ill. 6). The seal shows on one side an image of Elizabeth I enthroned, with the sceptre and other symbols of royalty; and on the reverse the royal coat-of-arms of lions and fleur-de-lys in the shape of a shield, supported by the dragon and the greyhound. Spenser appears to have conflated the two sides of this seal in order to produce his image of Mercilla



Illustration 6: Seal of the Court of Common Pleas

sitting to hear the people's indictment of a traitor.

vii

Mary Queen of Scots was not tried by the Court of Common Pleas. But by setting Duessa's trial in this context Spenser can develop points concerning the nature of royal justice in such serious cases. And, both as a subsidiary interest and as the specific example through which the general, philosophical statement is made, he can comment on the trial of Mary.

The Court of Common Pleas existed for the trial of cases between citizens, in which the Crown was not directly involved. We must ask why it is to this court that the "tryall of a great and weightie case" (V.ix.36.7) is brought. Duessa is being accused of treason, as Mary was, but she is accused not by the impersonal state, nor by the possibly biased central administration, but by the ordinary people of Mercilla's realm. The trial is not presented as a case of "Regina v. Duessa", but as the people versus Duessa. Treason is not solely a crime against the state or the individual monarch; rather it is a crime against the whole commonwealth, the "common wele", which benefits from the rule of a just and merciful monarch. And it is the commonwealth, made up of the ordinary people of the land, which demands justice. Hence the trial, perhaps, takes place in the Court of Common Pleas, the



court given over to such cases.

As one critic believes, the trial of Duessa is part of Spenser's "justification for Elizabeth's rule".<sup>44</sup> But it also more than that. Spenser uses a defence of Elizabethan justice as a means of discussing justice itself. In the case of Duessa's trial, Spenser makes the point that crimes against the monarch are not crimes against a royal individual, but against state and people. In such cases, the monarch must put aside personal feelings, and judge without either excessive mercy or rancour. Rather he must display, as Mercilla does, an altruistic regard for both justice and mercy, and for the well-being of the commonwealth.

### viii

As well as using the decoration on helmets for symbolic effect, Spenser draws on the traditional associations of this part of the knight's armour with love. The story of Britomart and Arthegall is punctuated by occasions on which helmets are removed, willingly or unwillingly, or the vizor lifted. On these occasions, the effect of the action involving the helmet is intense. When Britomart "vented up her umbriere" (III.i.42.8) at Castle Joyous, she inadvertently stimulated Malecasta's perverted lust. She herself is struck by love for

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44. Northrop, "Spenser's Defence of Elizabeth", p. 288.

Arthegall when he appears in King Ryence's mirror with his "bright ventayle lifted up on hye" (III.ii.24.3). Arthegall succumbs to her charms when he demolishes her helmet in battle (IV.vi.19-22); and her wrath is cooled when he and Scudamour "their bevers up did reare" (25.8). Later, Arthegall is equally vulnerable to Radigund's beauty displayed when he removes her helmet; and Britomart finally concludes this play on helmets by refusing to remove Radigund's in their duel, but "with one stroke both head and helmet cleft" (V.vii.34.6).

The prominence of helmets seen in these examples is peculiar to the story of Britomart and Arthegall in The Faerie Queene. It may be explained by reference to medieval and renaissance symbolism. In part of the prose Lancelot, such actions as the removal and replacement of the knight's helmet assume a similar significance to that noted above. Twice within a few pages Lancelot removes his helmet (because of the heat, a rare concession to practicality and comfort in these romances). On both occasions, he enters immediately afterwards "la forest perdue", in which compulsive dancing and merrymaking are taking place.<sup>45</sup> On the first occasion he is warned against proceeding further and turns back. On the second he perseveres;

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45. The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, Vol. 5, Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, Part 3, pp. 120 and 122.

immediately he loses his memory. Joining the revellers, he too begins to sing and dance, and his squire "takes him for mad. And he sang a song concerning Queen Guinevere".<sup>46</sup> The forest and the compulsive revellers seem to represent the darker side of the effects of love. It is significant that here he sings about Guinevere, because elsewhere Lancelot is careful never to mention his particular devotion to her.

To enter the forest he removes his helmet. And the connection between the helmet and love is acknowledged when Morgan la fee, attempting to discover Lancelot's identity, commands him "by the thing that you most love to remove your helmet".<sup>47</sup> Later, at a tournament in which Lancelot and Bohort fight in disguise, Guinevere supplies them both with armour. The Queen helps them both arm; but her lover is distinguished when it is stated that she laced on Lancelot's helmet herself.<sup>48</sup>

In the Renaissance, Valeriano explicitly connects love and the helmet: "the helmet ... signifies

46. Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, Part 3, p. 123:  
la tient pour fol. Et il cantoient une  
cancon de la royne Genieure.

<sup>161d.</sup>  
47. Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, Part 3, p. 167:  
par la riens que vous plus ames que vous  
ostes vostre heume.

<sup>161d.</sup>  
48. Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, Part 3, p. 185.

the hidden beginnings of generation".<sup>49</sup> What this cryptic statement means is never fully revealed; Valeriano appears to leave it deliberately obscure. But we may note that his comment conveys the sense of something hidden, waiting to be revealed; and that it is with the removal of helmets in The Faerie Queene, as in the prose Lancelot, that sexual attraction is acknowledged.

## ix

It is only when Britomart doffs her helmet that her sexual role is brought into the open. Once her head is uncovered, or her vizor raised, she both reacts and is reacted to sexually. For instance, the moving lament she utters during her first quest for Arthegall occurs only when her helmet has been taken off:

There she alighted from her light-foot beast,  
 And sitting downe upon the rocky shore,  
 Bad her old Squire unlace her lofty creast;...  
 Thereat she sighed deepe, and after thus  
complaynd  
 (III.iv.7.1-3; 9)

At other times, she can only bemoan her lot when dressed as a woman, as when she suspects Arthegall of having betrayed her (V.vi.3-6). The removal of her helmet

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49. Valeriano, f. 316<sup>v</sup>: "Galea ... significat occulta esse principia generationis".



They doe thy love, forlorne in womens thraldome  
see.

(V.vii.21)

The priests say that the gods can see through the helmet, as men cannot, to Britomart's real self. And we should notice that what they see are her sexual roles as a woman: daughter to King Ryence; lover and wife to Arthegall; and mother to a great dynasty. In this context it may be permissible to suggest that the first line contains a sexual pun: the helmet is indeed a "queint disguise", in that it is concealing her "queint" or pudendum, the symbol of her essential femininity.

x

To comprehend fully Spenser's use of the helmet in the history of Britomart and Arthegall we should also consider the helmet's part in the solar and lunar imagery connected with these figures. In her initial vision of her husband, Britomart sees that

Through ... [his] bright ventayle lifted up  
on hye  
His manly face ...  
Lookt foorth, as Phoebus face out of the  
east,  
Betwixt two shadie mountaines doth arize;  
(III.ii.24.3-7)

This simile, likening his face radiating from the helmet to the rising sun perceived between mountains, begins a series of images connecting Arthegall with the



sun (and thus of course with Prince Arthur also). The simile follows the traditional symbolism of the helmet. Valeriano explains that the helmet "is interpreted ... as the sun, during the time when it circles remote from our part of the world throughout the winter"; and he relates this interpretation to the myth of Proserpina.<sup>50</sup> The association of the hidden sun and the hidden face within the helmet parallels Arthegall's constant use of disguise until he claims the sun-shield from Braggadocchio at Marinell's tournament. Having adopted the sun-shield, which as Jane Aptekar has explained is ambiguously presented as Arthegall's own, he emerges for the first time as the near-equal of Prince Arthur and the second most important hero in the poem.<sup>51</sup> And his emergence is presented as an uncovering. He watches Braggadocchio's infamous conduct while "in the preasse close covered"; until "unto all himselfe there open shewed" (V.iii.20.2; 5). By his uncovering he reveals himself as the true solar hero.

That Arthegall and Britomart are made for each other is established by a similar use of such imagery. When they fight after Satyrane's tournament, Arthegall hews away Britomart's ventail, leaving her

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50. Valeriano, f. 316<sup>V</sup>: "Solem interpretantur, eo tempore quo per hyemem remotas a nobis mundi partes circuit".

51. Aptekar, p. 77.

face uncovered:

With that her angels face, unseene afore,  
Like to the ruddie morne appeared in sight,  
(IV.vi.19.5-6)

Her face, like Arthegall's in the magical mirror, is compared to the rising sun. The effect on Arthegall is dramatic: he falls to his knees and drops his sword involuntarily. This is similar to the effect of Radigund's face upon him. Having stunned her, he goes to remove her helmet and behead her. But although this helmet is "sunshinie" (V.v.11.8), her face is significantly different from those of Britomart and Arthegall: it is,

Like as the Moone in foggie winters night  
(V.v.12.8)

Radigund's face, like her arms, is associated with the moon; and it is thus in opposition to those of Britomart and Arthegall.

The removal of helmets to reveal sun-like features may be interpreted with Valeriano as signifying the re-emergence of the life-giving sun after the winter. The symbolism of the helmet joins that noted in the Isis Church episode by Alastair Fowler as indicating renewal and fertility.<sup>52</sup> The uncovering of Britomart's head in Isis Church leads to a dream of sexual fulfilment and fruition, prophetic of her future

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52. Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 211-15.

progeny. In conclusion, this dream may be read allegorically as predicting a time when there will be peace and fertility in the land, the result of a marriage between equity and justice, to be brought about by the descendant in the poem of Britomart and Arthegall: the new Astraea, Queen Elizabeth herself.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### WEAPONS AND BATTLES

In the previous two chapters I have discussed various arms and armour as they occur in descriptions that stand apart from the general narrative of the poem; such as the arms of Prince Arthur (I.vii) and of Sir Arthegall (III.iii).<sup>1</sup> Although I have related these descriptions to some of the battles and events of The Faerie Queene, I have yet to consider martial symbolism as it occurs within narrative passages.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter I shall suggest that Spenser uses the symbolism of weapons in the combats of his poem; and that, through the interaction of various weapons and the interplay of allegory and narrative, the individual arms are made capable of complex and subtle expression although themselves relatively simple in signification.

It is particularly valuable to consider weapons in the context of the narrative. Because of the physical nature of most weapons Spenser cannot invest them with meaning in some of the ways analysed in

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1. See Chapter One, Sections 1 and 2; Chapter Two, Sections 2 and 3.
  2. I do, of course, beg the question of whether narrative really exists in The Faerie Queene. Paul Alpers, for one, would dispute it (see The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene").

previous chapters. The poet develops and particularises the meaning of Sir Arthegall's helmet and shield, for instance, by having them curiously and uniquely decorated. For a sword or spear this method of individualisation is inappropriate: there is simply not room on a spear for much in the way of symbolic decoration.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see Spenser does particularise weapons occasionally. But mainly he evokes the general signification of the group. However, his use of these general, traditional meanings is far from simple, and an understanding of his intentions requires close study of the details of combats and battles.

In the first section I shall demonstrate through a study of Britomart's spear the way in which Spenser uses her characteristic attribute to convey the complexity of her virtue and the psychological state it implies. In the process I shall show the inadequacy of labelling Britomart and her weapon simply as representatives of chastity.

In the second section I shall discuss one weapon which is particularised, Arthur's sword Morddure,

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3. It is interesting to note that, despite the other-worldly and magical nature of The Faerie Queene, Spenser can sustain the illusion of realism when it suits him and does not describe impossibly decorated armaments. The plausible emblems on his shields contrast with some of those belonging to the heroes of Virgil and Homer, although Jasper Griffin makes the point that Homer manipulates the reader's awareness of illusion in similar ways (Homer (O.U.P., 1980), p. 33).

with the intention of demonstrating how Spenser uses the naming and description of the sword to relate Arthur to the heroes of previous literature and to suggest aspects of his role in the poem.

Finally I shall examine one of the principal battles of the poem, that which takes place over Guyon's body (II.viii). Although much attention has been given to the episode immediately preceding this, Guyon's journey through the realm of Mammon, there has been little study of the battle itself. As a result many of its baffling features and incidents remain unexplained. Consideration of these can lead us to the heart of Spenser's meaning, not just of the battle over Guyon's body, but of the cantos around it; and this meaning is primarily expressed through the symbolism of the weapons used.

#### Section One: Britomart's Spear

##### i

Spears in general and Britomart's spear in particular have been too easily interpreted as representing chastity in The Faerie Queene. On closer analysis there are many occasions when such a reading is implausible. Does Satyrane's "huge great speare" (IV.iv.17.2) represent chastity when he opens the



tournament for the possession of the false Florimell? Or Scudamour's when he gains entry to the Temple of Venus? Or Britomart's own when she so grievously wounds the celibate Marinell? Equally interesting are the occasions on which the spear is missing: why does Britomart use only her sword and shield to defeat Radigund and to rescue Amoret?

For some critics these questions are too hair-splitting. A.C. Hamilton deals with the last by explaining, "since Britomart is on foot, her sword substitutes for her 'enchanted' speare' ... whose virtue manifests the magical power of chastity".<sup>4</sup> Hamilton contends that the difference is insignificant and his explanation neutralises it.

To counter this rational explanation we may note that specific weapons are prominent in the story of Amoret and Scudamour, and that Spenser seems to associate the latter with the spear in particular. His doing so makes it unlikely that the substitution of one weapon for another should be lightly discounted. Furthermore, as many critics have noted, there are strong resemblances between Britomart's invasion of the House of Busyrane and Scudamour's of the Temple of Venus: but there are also crucial differences which centre on the weapons used. At the Temple, Scudamour does not dismount until he has gained entry, and his

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4. The Faerie Queene ed. A.C. Hamilton, p. 406.

principal weapon for doing so is his spear. Conversely, at Busyrane's house Britomart dismounts and abandons her spear, her characteristic weapon, before entering. Rather than ignore these differences, we should explore them to see whether they help us to understand why Britomart is successful and Scudamour is not in their attempts to free Amoret. Far from being insignificant, both the resemblances and the differences are of great importance to our comprehension of the story of Amoret and Scudamour; and as such have a direct bearing on our understanding of Britomart herself.

ii

Various critics, especially Alastair Fowler, have drawn attention to the Minervan connotations of Britomart's weapon, and have noted that the spear is thus a fitting attribute for the knight-patron of chastity.<sup>5</sup> But a brief study of the associations of spears in Books Three and Four muddies these clear waters by suggesting meanings that go beyond that of chastity. In particular, one group of weapons specifically challenges and contradicts that standard meaning.

In the third book, Britomart and Sir Palladine,

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5. See Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 124-25.



The phallic and more specifically lustful connotations of the club or mace are transferred to Satyrane's spear. Before Sir Palladine frightens Argante away, the giantess has dealt successfully with Satyrane, hitting him so hard with her "huge great yron mace" that he is stunned and she is able to capture him. Having been defeated by such a figure, it should come as no surprise that when he returns to where he had left the defeated Hyena, that animal has broken Florimell's girdle and run away. Satyrane's attempt to control his concupiscence, the struggle represented by his wrestling with the Hyena, has been unsuccessful, and his capture by Argante signifies this. His lustfulness is fully evident when we next see him, as he opens his tournament. To begin the jousting he takes

in hand  
An huge great speare, such as he wont to  
wield  
(IV.iv.17.1-2)

The transference to Satyrane's spear of the adjectives and, by implication, the connotations of Argante's mace signals that the tournament for the cestus, an emblem of chastity, will degenerate into a squalid dispute over rights to the body of the false Florimell. Satyrane's spear has come to represent the opposite of chastity, aggressive and violent incontinence.

Only if we are aware of these lustful connotations of the spear in The Faerie Queene can we







in which Amoret is imprisoned:

she at last came to a fountaine sheare,  
By which there lay a knight all wallowed  
Upon the grassy ground, and by him neare  
His haberieon, his helmet, and his speare;  
(III.xi.7.2-5)

Scudamour's very posture indicates that his sexuality is in some way reprehensible; he has taken up a position common to those characters in the poem overcome by lust, a position for which the word "wallow" is frequently used. Our strongest impression of the connotations of this word in Spenser's poetry come, not from The Faerie Queene, but from the Hymne of Heavenly Love where "wallow" seems to sum up all the distinctions between the earthly and the heavenly:

Then rouze thy selfe, O earth, out of thy  
soyle,  
In which thou wallowest like to filthy swyne  
And doest thy mynd in durty pleasures moyle,  
Unmindfull of that dearest Lord of thyne;  
(218-221)

Of the characters discovered wallowing thus in The Faerie Queene we may best compare Scudamour with the Red Cross Knight in Book One.<sup>10</sup> He also is found stretched out, his arms cast aside, lying by a fountain; and the looseness and fluidity of the Knight's physical state, similar to that of Cymochles, Verdant, and more tragically Mortdant in Book Two, indicates an unrestrained,

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10. Hamilton's comparison of Scudamour with Adonis surely mistakes the tone of one or other of these passages; unless he silently intends us to see the contrast. See The Faerie Queene ed. A.C. Hamilton, p. 402.

morally culpable sexuality. Scudamour's posture implies that Amoret's captivity and his failure to release her do not solely represent her fear of marriage and sex in the abstract, but derive in part from the manner of his wooing.

Scudamour's excessive sexuality is initially implied by the position in the poem of the description quoted above. Britomart discovers him while unsuccessfully pursuing Ollyphant. In a book using entrelacement so thoroughly, we do not expect any great narrative connection between the stories of Ollyphant and Scudamour. But there is a thematic connection. Ollyphant, the brother of Argante, has been seen chasing a "fearefull boy" (III.xi.4.6), and we are told that he "surpassed his sex masculine, / In beastly use" (III.xi.4.3-4). The fact that he is chasing a boy has caused some critics to imply that he is a representative of sodomy, or at least to exaggerate the scope of his "beastly use".<sup>11</sup> But as is the nature of a psychomachia, the external threat in the narrative signifies an internal characteristic, in this case the "fearefull boy's" own lust. A similar case, and one which is helpfully unfolded and explained by Spenser, is the struggle witnessed by Sir Guyon in Book Two,

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11. See, for example, Fowler's comments in Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 20 and 128.

where he sees how

A mad man, or that feigned mad to bee,  
Drew by the haire along upon the ground,  
A handsome stripling with gret crueltee  
(II.iv.3.5-7)

Here the aggressor is Furor. But the murderous fury thus personified is that within the "handsome stripling", occasioned (and the Occasion is also personified) by his believing slander of his bride-to-be. The personified excess is externalised and personified, but it remains that of the individual we see attacked in the narrative.

To return to Book Three, the explanation of Ollyphant's presence as a personification of lust, perhaps adolescent lust, seems more satisfying than that which presents him as an isolated instance of sodomy. If the former interpretation is correct, then pursuing a personification of aggressive and excessive masculine lust, Britomart comes upon Scudamour, whose wooing of Amoret displays just this characteristic. And it is clear from the description that he has been trying to rescue her from Busyrane using his spear, the very weapon calculated to increase her fear.

The symbol of that fear is the fire at the castle gate which has prevented Scudamour's entry. Britomart's response to the flames that rise up as they approach confirms the nature of Amoret's fear and Scudamour's thematic connection with Argante and Ollyphant. As she and Scudamour retreat from the



Busyrane at the nuptials of Amoret and Scudamour.<sup>13</sup>

Valeriano tells us that the Roman marriage ceremonies included a rather grim role for the spear:

Hence also the custom among the Romans that the heads of brides were adorned with [a pin called] a coelibaris or spear, because the newly married must subject themselves to the rule of the husband. They call that spear "coelibaris" which remains fixed in the body of a thrown down and killed gladiator. 14

This rather grotesque practice, also explained by Ovid (Fasti 2.560f.), also puts a frightening face on the relationship into which Amoret is being forced. And it also suggests a reason why Britomart dismounts before entering Busyrane's house. A mounted rider is traditionally a symbol of authority and power, and so it is also in The Faerie Queene. When Scudamour approaches the first gate of the Temple of Venus he does so on horseback; and he does not ask for entry but demands it:

to the Bridges utter gate I came:  
The which I found sure lockt and chained fast.  
I knockt, but no man aunswred me by name;  
I cald, but no man answerd to my clame.  
Yet I persever'd still to knocke and call,

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13. The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's "Faerie Queene" (Princeton: P.U.P., 1964), pp. 73-81.

14. Valeriano, f. 311<sup>r</sup>: "Hinc etiam mos apud Romanos fuit, ut nuptarum capita coelibari hasta comeruntur, propterea quod quae nuberet, imperio viri subjecerent. Coelibarem autem hastam vocabant, quae in corpore gladiatoris abjecti occisique stetisset."

15. See for example Valeriano, f. 33<sup>v</sup>.

Till at the last I spide within the same,  
 Where one stood peeping through a crevis small,  
 To whom I cald aloud, halfe angry herewithall.  
 (IV.x.11.2-9)

Whatever the traditional attitude of the lover, Scudamour is no suppliant, but commands instead. Britomart's action in dismounting before trying to enter Busyrane's house dissociates her from the husband's power and authority. ~~just as her abandonment of the spear removes the threat of violent and excessive sexuality this weapon has come to represent.~~ It is because she does not threaten Amoret in the ways Scudamour does that she can gain entry; and the fact that she does not threaten her is conveyed through her dismounting and the relinquishing of her characteristic weapon.

v

The principal conclusion to be drawn from this study is that the significance of the spear is far from unambiguous. It is a traditional attribute of Minerva and of chastity. But at the same time it is associated in the poem with lust and forceful sexuality: in fact with chastity's inverse, incontinence. In the past, the two sides of the spear's meaning have, when recognised, been kept distinct; and Britomart's spear in particular has been cordoned off as entirely virtuous.



This distinction and separation is surely unjustified. The paradox of chaste sexuality is the paradox inherent in Britomart's quest for Arthegall. The spear's double meaning is entirely apt for her chastity and for her single-minded search for her future husband, the future father of their illustrious progeny. Furthermore Spenser seems to see this paradox in chastity generally. One need only think of the sensuous description of Belpheobe and her powerful erotic effect on Braggadocchio.

The spear is also a fitting symbol of the problematic nature of Britomart's quest, which involves not only chastity but an aggressiveness and combativeness inappropriate in a wife. When Britomart dismounts and relinquishes her spear to enter Busyrane's house she leaves behind her the emblems of sexual and marital dominance normally the property of the male. When, mounted and armed, she does battle with Arthegall she must be forced to relinquish these emblems again before a healthy accord can be reached. In their battle, Arthegall accidentally wounds her horse and she is obliged to fight on foot. Whether or not this is a descent into nature, as T.K. Dunseath suggests, it is certainly a descent from her unnatural position of authority over Arthegall, whom she has already unhorsed.<sup>16</sup> As a result of this blow Britomart is

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16. Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book Five of "The Faerie Queene", p. 41.

forced to abandon her horse and is thus unable to  
continue to use her spear; she

her steede forsooke,  
And casting from her that enchaunted lance,  
Unto her sword and shield her soone betooke;  
(IV.vi.14.6-8)

~~There is, no doubt, a foreshadowing of Britomart's loss of her virginity to Arthegall in the loss of her spear at this point as Hamilton suggests in his edition (p. 468).~~ But She is ~~also~~ now armed as she was when entering the house of Busyrane. She has been divested of the assumed attributes and emblems of male sexuality and authority, and is now suitably attired to return to the normal, subordinate role of the woman.

## Section Two: Morddure

### i

One of the few individualised weapons in The Faerie Queene is Prince Arthur's sword, Morddure. This is described when the enchanter Archimago warns Pyrochles not to attempt to use it against Prince Arthur:

For that same knights owne sword this is of  
Which Merlin made by his almightie art  
For that his noursling, when he knighthood  
Therewith to doen his foes eternall smart.  
The metall first he mixt with Medaewart,

That no enchauntment from his dint might save;  
 Then it in flames of Aetna wrought apart,  
 And seven times dipped in the bitter wave  
 Of hellish Styx. which hidden vertue to it gave.

The vertue is, that neither steele, nor stone  
 The stroke thereof from entrance may defend,  
 Ne ever may be used by his fone,  
 Ne forst his rightfull owner to offend,  
 Ne ever will it breake, ne ever bend.  
 Wherefore Morddure it rightfully is hight.  
 (II.viii.20; 21.1-6)

Two points immediately arise from this description.  
 Firstly it confirms Spenser's usual practice of ignoring  
 the ancient traditions concerning King Arthur's armour  
 and weapons when equipping his Prince. Upton records  
 with satisfaction,

I cannot help observing how designedly  
 Spenser here omits to follow either that silly  
 romance called the History of Prince Arthur,  
 which gives a long and ridiculous account of  
 his sword, Excalibur, i.e. cut steel: or  
 even Jeffrey of Monmouth, who says, his  
 sword's name was Caliburn ... 17

Upton himself goes on to raise the second point, the new  
 name, "Morddure". As is often the case in The Faerie  
Queene, Spenser's phrasing invites us to interpret this  
 name: "Wherefore Morddure it rightfully is hight".  
 But why rightfully? Following Upton's suggestion, all  
 critics seem to have assumed that the name means "hard-  
 biter". A.C. Hamilton, one of the poem's most recent  
 commentators, supports this interpretation by reference  
 to two occasions on which the sword is said to bite.<sup>18</sup>

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17. The Faerie Queene ed. ~~John~~ Upton, Vol. 2, p. 474.

18. The Faerie Queene ed. ~~A.C.~~ Hamilton, p. 240.

But his own references reveal the deficiencies of this case, because one of them is mistakenly to a description of an entirely different sword, that of Cymochles (II.viii.44.8). Many weapons are said to bite hard in The Faerie Queene; but not all are called Morddure.

A more serious criticism of the standard interpretation of this name is that it leads nowhere and explains nothing. As Hamilton himself concludes, "if one fully understood the poem's names, one would fully understand its allegory".<sup>19</sup> "Hard-biter" does not enable us to progress very far, and this seems particularly unsatisfactory when Spenser has made the naming of the sword so prominent. Whilst not rejecting the accepted interpretation altogether, we may suggest that it is a superficial meaning, and that there are others below, more complex and more significant.

## ii

Archimago names the sword at the end of his description of its manufacture and powers; and the implication of the word "wherefore" is that its name derives from that description.

In the stanzas quoted above Spenser concentrates on the sword's hardness: it penetrates steel

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19. The Faerie Queene ed. ~~A.C.~~ Hamilton, p. 15.

and stone and will never break or bend. We are told that it gained its strength through immersion in the Styx. The name Morddure perhaps grows out of this hardening process: the Styx is the river of death. We may suggest that the meaning of Morddure is "death-hard" or "hardened by death", from mors, death, and durus, hard.

Arthur's sword is not unique in being tempered in this manner. In the Aeneid Turnus arms himself with the sword "which the fire-ruling god [Vulcan] himself made for his father Daunus and dipped, glowing hot, in the Stygian wave".<sup>20</sup> The phrasing of Spenser's "dipped in the bitter wave / Of hellish Styx" closely recalls Virgil's "Stygia ... tinxerant unda". The circumstances of the manufacture of Turnus's sword also resemble those of the Prince's; both are made by other-worldly figures with magical or divine powers. The principal difference is that Turnus's sword undergoes this baptism only once, whereas Arthur's is immersed seven times. As well as its significance as a number of perfection, the change to seven shows Spenser again "overgoing" his sources.

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20. The Aeneid of Virgil ed. R.D. Williams; 12.90-91:

ensem, quem Dauno ignipotens deus ipse parenti  
fecerat et Stygia candentem tinxerat unda.

## iii

As was noted in connection with Arthur's helmet, a reference to Turnus tends to point back a further stage in epic evolution to Achilles.<sup>21</sup> In the non-Homeric legends, the child Achilles was dipped in the Styx by his mother Thetis as part of a general programme to render him invulnerable. Arthur's sword is also hardened in the fires of "Aetna", and another of Thetis's techniques was to place her child in the fire each day.<sup>22</sup> There may also be a reference to Achilles in the strange herb "Medaewart" which Merlin is said to have mixed with the steel of the blade. Upton suggests that this is a reference to the herb medica mentioned by Virgil in the Georgics (IV.65), which has curative powers.<sup>23</sup> The effect of blending the herb with the steel would be to give the blade curative powers in addition to its hardness. A weapon that wounds and heals is, of course, well-known in Arthurian legend, the principal example being the spear used to heal the Maimed King. Such an analogy would strengthen the

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21. Turnus is frequently called "apud Achilles" by Virgil and takes the role of Achilles to Aeneas's Hector in the Latin epic's rematching of these heroes.

22. The Alexandra of Lycophron ed. and tr. George W. Mooney (1921), pp. 20-21 (ll. 178-79).

23. The Faerie Queene, Vol. 2, p. 474.

connections with Galahad noted in the first chapter. But it is now less well-known that these powers were also ascribed to Achilles's spear. The Elizabethans were certainly aware of this tradition; Thomas Watson likens the wounds of love to those of Achilles:

I must compare  
With fatall woundes of Telephus alone,  
And say, that he, whose hand hath wrought my  
care,  
Must eyther cure my fatall wounde, or none:  
Helpe therefore gentle Love to ease my heart,  
Whose paines encrease, till thou withdraw  
they dart.  
(Hekatompathia 68,  
lines 13-18)

Watson helpfully explains to his reader that

whereas the Author in the end of this passion,  
alludeth to the woundes of Telephus, he is to  
be understoode of that Telephus, the Sonne of  
Hercules, of whose wounde, being made and  
healed by Achilles onely, Ovid writeth ... 24

As was noted previously in connection with Arthur's spear, Spenser has changed the weapon to which a particular quality belongs, but the allusion to Achilles possibly remains.<sup>25</sup>

## iv

One further interpretation of Morddure should be mentioned. The hardness implied in durus carries

24. Poems ed. Edward Arber (1870), p. 104. I am indebted to Professor Alastair Fowler for drawing this poem to my attention.

25. See Chapter Two, Section 2.i.



the sense of temporal duration, as in the verb duro, to survive. The sword's name possibly suggests that it survives death. This could be taken to mean that the sword, as a symbol of fame, outlives its owner; and indeed the sword is sometimes an attribute of Fame in the Renaissance.<sup>26</sup> Or one may read the name literally to mean that the sword itself would survive after Prince Arthur's death. In this case the name would imply the longevity mentioned in the original description of his armour which, after his death, was gathered up by the Faery Queen and brought to Faery Land, "where yet it may be seene, if sought" (I.vii.36.9).<sup>27</sup> These two readings are not, of course, mutually exclusive: the survival of Arthur's armour may represent, among other things, the survival of his fame.

### Section Three: The Battle over Guyon's Body

#### i

Although I have suggested a meaning for the name Morddure, its significance can only be understood in the context in which it is named, the battle over

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26. See Tervarent, col. 157.

27. See Chapter One, Section 3.iii.

Guyon's body. We must ask why Spenser did not include the sword when he described the rest of Prince Arthur's armour in Book One; and why he chose to reveal its nature at this particular point in Book Two. In order to answer these questions we must consider Arthur's battle with Pyrochles and Cymochles, and the place of martial symbolism within it.

Given C.S. Lewis's early judgement that Prince Arthur is too shadowy a figure to be interpreted satisfactorily, I must resist appropriating his term "allegorical cores" for the rescues of the Red Cross Knight and Sir Guyon.<sup>28</sup> Nor would the appropriation of the term be entirely fair, for there is a real sense of distillation in the description of the Houses entered by the knights-patron in Books One and Two.<sup>29</sup> But in both cases the earlier rescue is something of a watershed. At the nadir of the fortunes of both these knights, a new perspective is introduced by the entry of Prince Arthur. The emblematic nature of his

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28. The Allegory of Love (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 334 and 336.

29. In English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 381, the House of Holiness and the House of Alma are given as the "allegorical cores" of Books One and Two. In The Allegory of Love the core of Book One is interestingly given as the Red Cross Knight's battle with Orgoglio.

battles with Orgoglio and the sons of Acrates enables the reader to stand back suddenly from the individual episodes of the quest and perceive a pattern in the broad sweep of adventures. And this effect is not dissimilar to that Lewis saw in his allegorical cores, in which "the theme of that book would appear disentangled from the complex adventures and reveal its unity".<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the outcome of these rescues projects the pattern into the future, reassuring the reader and allowing an element of humour to creep into the final confrontation of each knight-patron.

Arms and armour are in the forefront of both rescues. When Una first sees Prince Arthur she is carrying with her the Red Cross Knight's abandoned armour, "the forlorne reliques of his powre" (I.vii.48.1). In the second book, the Palmer echoes both her thought and her phrasing when Pyrochles tries to disarm the unconscious Guyon, pleading with him to "leave these relicks of his living might" (II.viii.16.6). And as we shall see, throughout the battle with Pyrochles and Cymochles the weapons used are of the utmost significance in establishing Spenser's meaning.

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30. English Literature in the Sixteenth Century,  
p. 381.

Like Prince Arthur's rescue of the Red Cross Knight, the battle over Guyon's body is emblematic of the book in which it occurs. It sums up and recapitulates the previous seven cantos and foreshadows the eventual conclusion.

Expressed thus baldly, the reader could be forgiven for dismissing Spenser's repetitive structure in the way F.W. Bateson concludes his discussion of a Spenser sonnet: "It is permissible to regret the diffuseness of Elizabethan poetry".<sup>31</sup> Bateson criticises this sonnet, Amoretti LIX, for its "non-committal tautologies" (p. 30), its "repetitions, glosses, and amplifications" (p. 29). In fact the sonnet's structure is somewhat analogous to that Spenser developed for The Faerie Queene, where the initial idea, or "primary meaning" to use Bateson's words, is recapitulated in a variety of allegorical passages. Thus in Book One, for example, the Knight's battle with Errour is partially reflected in the three days of the final Dragon-fight; and both are summed up and contained in the Prince's battle with Orgoglio. Should The Faerie Queene be accused, with Amoretti LIX, of a "disconcerting flatness and lack of emphasis" (p. 30)?

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31. English Poetry and the English Language (1934; 3rd edition, O.U.P., 1973), p. 30.

Bateson explains the tautologies of the sonnet as being the result of the poet's awareness of the unfixed nature of the language: one thought requires expression in a variety of different ways to ensure its intelligibility in future years. While this may be partially true, it is not an adequate description of Spenser's aims either in this sonnet or in The Faerie Queene. In both poems, each recapitulation and re-expression sheds a different light on the "primary meaning", entailing the further exploration of the original idea. It is only by reducing the "primary meaning" to the barest and least interesting of formulae that either poem can truly be called tautological. The theme of the sonnet, the Lady's "settled mind", is complex; Spenser's meaning is by no means as obvious as Bateson suggests. By restating the theme in a variety of emotional contexts, Spenser develops and deepens our understanding of the Lady's psychological and moral state. Similarly in The Faerie Queene the different allegorical expressions of a single theme enable the poet to expound it with greater resonance and clarity, a clarity depending not on simplicity but on a recognition of the true complexity of the subject.

## iii

We may see this technique in operation in Book One, where Spenser uses martial symbolism in the battles with Errour, the Dragon, and Orgoglio to link these episodes in our minds. Furthermore, he uses the same martial symbolism to point the essential differences between them.

The turning point in the Red Cross Knight's battle with Errour is Una's admonition, "add faith unto your force, and be not faint" (I.i.19.3). Her exhortation comes just at the crucial point when Errour has "lept fierce upon his shield" (18.6), the shield we know from the Letter to Raleigh to be that of faith. Una's words encourage her Knight to alter his attitude to human prowess and to God, to have faith in God rather than in his own strength. But in the battle with the Dragon, in which the monster at the decisive moment likewise "did fiercely fall, / Upon his sunne-bright shield" (I.xi.40.8-9), the Knight's revivals and ultimate victory have nothing to do with his own attitudes. They are the result of God's grace gained inadvertently through the happy falls to lie beside the Well of Life and the Tree of Life. Narratively, the conquests of Errour and the Dragon are similar; allegorically they are perhaps aspects of the same struggle, but different in this respect, that in one

the struggle is seen from man's perspective, where human faith is the key to success; and in the other from God's perspective, where the gift of grace is seen as all-important.

The third of these episodes, Arthur's defeat of Orgoglio, also has its turning-point, this time the uncovering of the Prince's shield. As was seen in the first chapter, the diamond shield is symbolic of grace, and its sudden revelation conveys the entry of grace into the poem. But we also know that this is the shield of faith, perhaps the poem's pre-eminent shield of faith, and the uncovering of the Prince's shield suggests the entry of that virtue too. Thus in an emblematic scene, Spenser uses one action to convey the advent of both grace and faith; he unites in a single martial symbol the perspectives of both the earlier and later battles. And in doing so he further deepens our understanding by suggesting the essential unity of the two. The three recapitulations bring with them not only the benefits of summary, but also fresh insights into Book One's central theme.

This technique is employed throughout The Faerie Queene. To use Edgar Wind's fine phrase, episodes in Spenser's poem are continually unfolding each other, while themselves being unfolded. One suspects that it is this interdependence which so forcibly suggests the existence of a structure to the







tells the Palmer is inconceivable in a true knight:

Palmer, (said he) no knight so rude, I weene,  
 As to doen outrage to a sleeping ghost:  
 (26.1-2)

Spenser makes the point that both the Prince and Sir Guyon are recognisably virtuous by their faces; but the chief contrast in this canto is between these heroes's attitude to words, and that of the pagan brothers.

v

In keeping with the references to speech before the battle, the Palmer subsequently describes it to Guyon as "the whole debate" (54.6). The combat begins with the significantly unannounced assault on Arthur by Pyrochles, for which he is criticised for breaking "the law of armes, to strike foe undefide" (31.7). With Cymochles's death the references to speech become almost parodic:

He tombling downe on ground,  
 Breathd out his ghost, which to th'infernall  
 Fast flying, there eternall torment found<sup>shade</sup>  
 (45.6-8)

As in the description of Arthur's sword, Spenser is relying on our knowledge of the conclusion of the Aeneid; Cymochles's death is closely similar to that of Turnus:

But the other's limbs grew slack and chill,

and with a moan life passed indignant to  
the Shades below. 33

Spenser's "breathd out his ghost" is close to the sense of gemitu in the Aeneid; but it lacks any of the reference to lamenting or groaning conveyed by the Latin. Unlike Turnus's audible last breath, Cymochles's is entirely silent.

Pyrochles's response, after a brief denunciation of Arthur, is to go literally berserk. The description of his desperate attack continues the parody. Arthur coolly watches Pyrochles exhaust himself; and wind or breath is the basis of the metaphor Spenser uses to convey his pointless and ineffective violence:

As when a windy tempest bloweth hye,  
That nothing may withstand his stormy stowre,  
The cloudes, as things affrayd, before him  
flye;  
But all so soon as his outrageous powre  
Is layd, they fiercely then begin to shoure  
(48.1-5)

This metaphor contains another unrecognised allusion to Book Twelve of the Aeneid. Spenser has combined two similes describing Aeneas and Turnus in their final battle. Firstly Turnus is likened to

the blast of the Edonian Northwind [which]  
roars on the deep Aegean, and drives the  
billows; where the winds swoop, the clouds

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33. Aeneid 12.951-52:

ast illi solvuntur frigore membra  
vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras.

scud through the sky 34

But later in the battle Aeneas is described as a great cloud dominating the winds:

As when a tempest bursts, and a storm-cloud  
moves towards the land through mid-ocean ...  
before it fly the winds. 35

Spenser combines Virgil's two similes in one, using them to establish the difference between the ineffective wind and the more truly tempestuous and powerful rain-storm. Like his brother, and of course like Orgoglio another empty windbag, Pyrochles is all air and no speech. Their incapacity to express themselves is mirrored by Pyrochles's inability to wield Arthur's sword; when Pyrochles, finding his windy turmoil useless,

How that straunge sword refusd, to serve his  
But when he stroke most strong, the dint  
He flong it from him

In the previous pages it has been noted that Spenser frequently alludes to the final stages of the Aeneid: as has often been said, Pyrochles's last words echo those of Turnus; we may now add that Cymochles's death also recalls the last lines of the Aeneid; and the storm simile wittily combines two of Virgil's. As we examine the battle over Guyon's body we become aware that these resemblances are not random, nor are they merely evidence of Spenser's adherence to epic convention. They are specific allusions designed to elucidate the meaning of this part of The Faerie Queene. Furthermore these allusions centre on the dominating symbols of this canto, the weapons used by Arthur and Pyrochles.

The extent to which these weapons govern the action has not been recognised. Arthur begins his defence of Guyon swordless, Morddure having been stolen by Archimago and seized by Pyrochles. The Prince defends himself with his spear, which is gradually destroyed by Cymochles, while Pyrochles finds that Morddure will not harm its rightful owner. The Palmer, rather tardily, gives Arthur Guyon's sword, with which he kills Cymochles and then Pyrochles, after the latter has thrown away Morddure in rage.

Two further allusions to the Aeneid should be noted. Firstly the opposition of sword and spear is

one Virgil makes in the final moments of the battle between Aeneas and Turnus, when he describes them as

one trusting to his sword, one fiercely  
towering with his spear. 36

In The Faerie Queene, Arthur bears the spear, the weapon of the victorious Aeneas. Secondly, the difficulty Pyrochles experiences in using Morddure, how "when he stroke most strong, the dint deceiv'd", is an allusion to Turnus's similarly misplaced trust in the sword he is using:

But the traiterous sword snaps, and in mid-  
stroke fails its fiery lord. 37

The epithet Virgil uses for Turnus, ardentem, particularly connects this hero with the literally fiery Pyrochles. The general resemblances between Pyrochles and Turnus have been noted previously.<sup>38</sup> But critics have not noticed the depth of Spenser's reference to the Aeneid, nor the particular allusions to the weapons wielded in its final stages.

## vii

In the line quoted above, "one trusting to

36. Aeneid 12.789:

hic gladio fidens, hic acer et arduus hasta

37. Aeneid 12.731-32:

at perfidus ensis  
frangitur in medioque ardentem deserit ictu

38. See the summary in James Nohrnberg's The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene", pp. 302-303.



his sword, one fiercely towering with his spear", Virgil characterises his heroes by the weapons they use. His commentators went further, allegorising their arms and armour. Fulgentius, who sees the Aeneid as a psychomachia, interprets the battle, the participants, and the weapons they use. Turnus, as we would expect, emerges as something very close to Pyrochles:

In IX, X, & XI he [Aeneas] fights with his arms against Turnus. For Turnus is as to say in Greek turonus, that is the furious sense. 39

Like Pyrochles, Turnus represents ire and wrath undermining the good man. The weapons Venus gives her son are also interpreted:

then the arms of Vulcan, that is the defence against the fire of the senses, protecting against all wicked trials. For Vulcan [is] as if [to say] bulencauson, that is, spiritual counsel. 40

In the struggle between the good man and his undisciplined furious faculty, Virgil's real meaning in this passage according to Fulgentius, the defence from heaven is in the form of divine counsel or advice; Turnus represents the inflamed senses, and Aeneas's

39. Fabi Planciadis Fulgentii V.C. Liber de expositione Virgilianae continentiae (1589), p. 23: "In IX, X, et XI, ipsis armis abjurus contra Turnum pugnat. Turnus enim Graece dicitur quasi turonus, id est furibundus sensus".

40. Fulgentius, p. 23: "Deinde arma Vulcania, id est igniti sensus munimina adversus omne malitiae tentamentum induitur. Vulcanus enim bulencauson, id est ardens consilium dicitur".

arms divine counsel.

With Fulgentius's interpretation in mind, we can now make more sense of Arthur's cryptic comment at the beginning of his defence of the helpless Guyon:

Words well dispost  
Have secret powre, t'appease inflamed rage:  
(26.7-8)

Arthur relies on the "secret powre" of his words to defeat the pagan brothers, as Aeneas uses his divinely given armour to overcome Turnus. The difference is, of course, that Arthur's words do not have their desired effect.

### viii

Spenser's battle, as the reader will have noticed, is different from Virgil's. In the Aeneid, the hero is able to defeat Turnus with his spear, whereas Arthur's spear is not sufficient in The Faerie Queene. There, the Prince is gradually losing, able only to defend himself, not to conquer his attackers, until the Palmer gives him Guyon's sword.

As soon as the battle opens, Arthur accomplishes all that Aeneas did, by wounding Pyrochles:

With that his balefull speare, he fiercely bent  
Against the Pagans brest, and therewith thought  
His cursed life out of her lodge have rent:  
But ere the point arrived, where it ought,  
That seven-fold shield, which he from Guyon  
brought  
He cast betwene to ward the bitter stound:  
Through all those foldes the steelehead

And through his shoulder pierst; wherwith  
 He groveling fell, all gored in his gushing  
 passage wrought  
 to ground  
 wound.  
 (32)

The reference to the seven-fold shield through which he pierces connects this wound with that sustained by Turnus:

Like black whirlwind on flies the spear,  
 bearing fell destruction, and pierces the  
 corslet's rim and the seven-fold shield's  
 utmost circle: whizzing it passes right  
 through the thigh. 41

As with the allusions to Turnus's death, in which Pyrochles spoke Turnus's last words and Cymochles's spirit departed as the Latin prince's had done, so here Spenser has divided Aeneas's fatal blow between the two brothers. Pyrochles is wounded through the seven-fold shield, but in the shoulder; it is Cymochles who receives the spear in the thigh. This wound is more appropriate to him, a thigh wound being a mark of concupiscence.<sup>42</sup>

After Pyrochles has been wounded, Arthur is faced by Cymochles, who is able to achieve that which

41. Aeneid 12.923-25:

volat atri turbinis instar  
 exitium dirum hasta ferens orasque recludit  
 loricae et clipei extremos septemplicis orbis.

42. There are many examples of the association of such wounds with concupiscence. Perhaps one of the most interesting is Sir Perceval's self-inflicted wound in Book 14 of the Morte D'Arthur.

Pyrochles cannot, the unhorsing of Arthur. Furthermore, it is Cymochles who wounds the Prince and gradually destroys his spear. Herein lies another difference from the Aeneid in which there is no corresponding figure for Cymochles.

In the Book of Temperance, the unhorsing of Arthur should be read allegorically: the Prince has lost control of the horse of the passions, and it is Cymochles, the personification of the concupiscent faculty, who has undermined him. One assumes that Cymochles is able to challenge Arthur because of the latter's love for Gloriana; an ennobling love to be sure, but love by its nature is perilous and prone to excess.<sup>43</sup> The effect of concupiscence is to allow the other passions free rein; when Arthur has been unhorsed by Cymochles, Pyrochles is able to return to the fray, despite his wound, and with augmented fury: he rears

himselfe againe to cruell fight,  
Three times more furious, and more puissaunt,  
Unmindfull of his wound, of his fate ignoraunt.  
(II.viii.34.7-9)

Every time Arthur prepares the coup de grace for Pyrochles, and the latter wards the blow with Guyon's shield, the Prince's resolve vanishes:

But ever at Pyrochles when he smit,

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43. His love leads Arthur from the straight and narrow in his pursuit of Florimell, for instance (III.i).

Who Guyons shield cast ever him before,  
 Whereon the Faery Queenes pourtract was writ,  
 His hand relented, and the stroke forbore,  
 And his deare hart the picture gan adore,  
 Which oft the Paynim sav'd from deadly stowre.  
 (II.viii.43.1-6)

And each time his hand relents he is assailed by  
 Cymochles, who

on the hauberk stroke the Prince so sore,  
 That quite disparted all the linked frame,  
 And pierced to the skin, but bit no more,  
 Yet made him wise to reele, that never moov'd  
 afore.  
 44.6-9)

Spenser's meaning seems to be that concupiscence is the key to control of the passions; until this temptation is mastered, the others cannot be restrained. For this reason Spenser links the fate of Pyrochles to that of his brother in a way that has caused problems for some critics. Spenser tells us that Pyrochles's end has come, and leads us to expect that his death will follow immediately:

But him henceforth the same can save no more;  
 For now arrived is his fatall howre,  
 That no'te avoyded be by earthly skill or powre.  
 (43.7-9)

But this expectation is not satisfied. What we then see is Cymochles's death.<sup>44</sup> By guiding our expectations in this way Spenser teaches us the inter-relation of concupiscence and fury, demonstrating the

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44. Cymochles dies by a wound to the head, corresponding with that he gave Arthur, which brought the latter down from his horse.

need to conquer the former before the latter will become manageable.

ix

Cymochles's power is demonstrated by his ability to destroy Arthur's spear, which Pyrochles cannot do. Gradually he reduces it to a useless stump.

Returning to Fulgentius, we can perhaps discover how to interpret this power. Fulgentius adds a second meaning for Aeneas's arms which accords with part of Arthur's role in the protection of Guyon:

against all fury the arms of wisdom and  
character struggle. 45

As well as representing spiritual counsel, Aeneas's arms signify wisdom. Spenser perhaps has divided these two meanings, for in the first half of the battle Arthur uses only his spear. As hardly needs saying, the spear is an attribute of Minerva, goddess of wisdom. In Arthur's hands it may indicate that his intervention should be seen as the use of wisdom to protect the good man against vice and intemperance.

But concupiscence can deprive wisdom of its power and ultimately destroy it. Even as Arthur

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45. Fulgentius, p. 23: "Contra omnem enim furiam sapientiae atque ingenii arma reluctant".

gives Cymochles his symbolic thigh wound the latter begins to affect the Prince:

through his thigh the mortall steele  
  did gryde:  
He swarving with the force, within his flesh  
Did breake the launce, and let the head abyde:  
  (36.5-7)

The spear is blunted and broken, and Cymochles progressively cuts away the spear, gradually reducing the power of wisdom.

"Against two foes of so exceeding might" (34.4), Arthur cannot conquer, only defend: "nought could he hurt, but still at ward did ly" (39.7). Although more than a match for Pyrochles, he cannot contend with both brothers at once using only his spear. At this point and in these terms we can begin to see the application of this emblematic restatement to the career of Sir Guyon. Relying on his temperance and human virtues, Guyon is able to resist all attacks on him in the first seven cantos of Book Two. But he is never able to destroy those things which militate against temperance. He cannot overcome Huddibras and Sans loy. His defeats of Furor and Occasion are temporary, and his separate battles with Pyrochles and Cymochles are inconclusive. Most of all Guyon can go through Mammon's realm unscathed but is totally unable to challenge it. Finally his human, unaided virtue is insufficient, and he falls unconscious into the hands of the Pagan brothers.



This is the state represented by Arthur's temporary and diminishing power of self defence with the spear alone. Guyon's ultimate unconscious state is mirrored in Arthur's "huge perplexity" (39.5) when he faces, effectively weaponless, the Pagan brothers.

**x**

The Palmer's intervention has long been recognised as signalling divine assistance; the Palmer himself virtually says so:

Faire son, great God thy right hand  
To use that sword so wisely as it ought. (40.4-5)

The gift of the sword also carries with it a more particular meaning. In the preceding sections we have noted many references to speech and words in this canto, the Palmer even calling the battle a debate. As we shall see at greater length in the following chapter, in terms of the Epistle to the Ephesians (the context to which Spenser directs us for the Red Cross Knight's armour in the Letter to Raleigh) the sword of the Christian warrior is "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God" (6.11). When the Palmer gives Guyon's sword to Arthur with God's blessing, allegorically it is God's word which is received by the man assailed by intemperance. Until this point Arthur's weaponry has been confined to the spear, the symbol of wisdom but no more; subsequently, his arms also signify that spiritual counsel sent by

God, as Aeneas's do for Fulgentius.

In the course of the preceding seven cantos, Guyon has progressively lost contact with his guide. The Palmer is left on the shore of Phaedria's lake, and his counsel is lacking when his charge meets Cymochles on her island and afterwards journeys through Mammon's realm. But at Guyon's moment of greatest need, after he has fainted, an angel comes to guard him and guides the Palmer to his side. It is this divine intervention which is represented emblematically in Arthur's receipt of the blessed sword from the Palmer.

The function of this sword connects with the naming of Morddure, which I have called the verse of this emblematic episode. The etymological meanings suggested, "death-hard", "hardened by death", or "surviving death", all recall the role of Christ as saviour of mankind, who survived death and was paradoxically strengthened by it. Arthur's role as the rescuer of the Red Cross Knight and Sir Guyon has many times been compared to that of Christ. We may now suggest that the sword's name also refers to this.

# xi

Support for this interpretation of Morddure may be gained through the interpretation of Pyrochles's difficulty in wielding it. When he first attempts to strike Arthur, Spenser emphasises and re-emphasises the weapon he is misusing:

With that his hand, more sad then lomp of lead,  
 Uplifting high, he weened with Morddure,  
 His owne good sword Morddure, to cleave his  
 head.

(II.viii.30.5-7)

The comparison of Pyrochles's hand to lead recalls  
 Valeriano's interpretation of the sword as speech, citing  
 Diogenes:

Diogenes compares words to the sword, having  
 seen a good young man devise dishonest  
 things: "Have you no shame (he said) to  
 draw a sword of lead from a scabbard of  
 ivory"? 46

Pyrochles is attempting to do exactly this, because  
 previously Arthur's

mortall blade full comely hong  
 In yvory sheath, ycarv'd with curious slights.  
 (I.vii.30.6-7)

Spenser has transferred the leadenness to Pyrochles's  
 hand; nevertheless Pyrochles's action indicates that he  
 has appropriated speech or words and is attempting to  
 abuse them.

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46. Valeriano, f.314<sup>V</sup>: "Diogenes verba gladio compa-  
 ravit, cum adolescentem formosum admodum turpia  
 quaedam fabulentem audivisset: Non te, inquit,  
 pudet ex eburnea vagina plumbeum gladium exerere".

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MARTIAL SYMBOLISM IN BOOK ONE OF "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

Although I have referred in passing to martial symbolism in the first book of The Faerie Queene while discussing the subject in general, I have decided to devote a chapter to this book alone. In Book One, Spenser uses specifically Christian symbolism and sources to a far greater degree than elsewhere and this book, as a result, has a different character from that of the rest of the poem.

The prominence of martial symbolism in the first book is indicated by the opening stanzas. Spenser begins his epic with a detailed and extended description of the arms and armour of the Red Cross Knight. And the significance of the martial device decorating his breastplate and shield is such that, although we later know him to be St George, Spenser continues to refer to him largely by his original, emblematic appellation, as the Red Cross Knight.

In the course of this initial description Spenser leaves unexplained many puzzling features of the Knight's armour. This obscurity, far from being accidental, seems deliberately created in the description, which at times resembles a riddle. The poet seems to challenge us to make sense of his lines: the

Knight's shield bears,

The cruell markes of many' a bloudy fielde;  
Yet armes till that time did he never wield:  
(I.i.1.3-4)

We are provoked by the poet to interpret the arms of the Knight. And this incitement to interpret the "armour of a Christian man" is a subject I shall return to later in this chapter.

Although Book One is anomalous, its position at the beginning of the poem renders its Christian martial symbolism of considerable importance. The meanings assigned in this book to the armour and martial actions of the Christian warrior may lose their overt pre-eminence in the course of the poem, but our reading of the subsequent books is always to some extent conditioned by Spenser's opening legend. As a result, Book One merits considerable and undivided attention.

### Section One: The Whole Armour of God

#### i

The first source whatsoever proposed in connection with The Faerie Queene was supplied by the poet himself. We are told in the Letter to Raleigh that Una offered the Red Cross Knight (as we are later to know him) "the armour of a Christian man specified by

Saint Paul v. Ephes.".<sup>1</sup> The straightforwardness of the statement might lead us to expect simplicity in the poem: the Epistle to the Ephesians contains the famous allegorical description of the "whole armour of God" (6.11) and it is to this description Spenser refers us. But by the end of Book One the identification of the Red Cross Knight's armour with that of Ephesians seems incompatible with the role his armour has played.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps most incongruous is the roasting of the Knight inside his armour on the first day of the final Dragon-fight, which has led Carol V. Kaske to comment, "such treacherous armor can hardly represent 'the armour of a Christian man' of the Letter to Raleigh, the 'armes' extolled above the 'man' in the invocation to this canto".<sup>3</sup> The doubts voiced by Kaske are doubly serious: not only do they question the stated meaning of the armour; but in doing so they call into question the overall relevance of the Letter to Raleigh, Spenser's

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1. Var 1, p. 169.

2. I feel it permissible to speak of armour as having a "role" here because in canto 11 it is presented almost as an independent character. See the description of the fatal wound, in which the Knight's sword, and not the Knight himself is protagonist:

The weapon bright  
Taking advantage of his open jaw,  
Ran through his mouth  
(I.xi.53.5-7).

3. Carol V. Kaske, "The Dragon's Spark and Sting and the Structure of Red Cross's Dragon-Fight: The Faerie Queene 1.xi-xii", SP 66 (1969), p. 621.

only direct comment on his poem.

In the following pages I shall propose a solution to the problem of the treacherous armour which does not conflict with the Letter, deriving my interpretation from the context to which Spenser directs us: St Paul's use of the metaphor of armour. This interpretation will clarify the overall meaning of the Knight's battle with the Dragon, the culmination and summation of his adventures. In doing so it will deepen our understanding of the Knight's relation to Christ, one of the central themes of this book.

## ii

St Paul uses the metaphors of armour and warfare particularly in the Epistles to the Romans and to the Ephesians. In both he is concerned with the transformation of the individual from the Old Man of the pre-Christian era to the New Man of Christianity. This change, potential not automatic, requires an effort on the part of the individual to overcome his own propensities for evil. And it is in connection with the Christian's internal struggle that the martial metaphors are used.

The central statement of this theme is Romans Chapter Six, where St Paul associates the Christian's



weapons with his body:<sup>4</sup>

Let not sinne reigne therefore in your mortal bodie, that ye shulde obey it in the lustes thereof.

Nether give ye your membres as weapons of unrighteousnes unto sinne: but give your selves unto God, as they that are alive from the dead, and give your membres as weapons of righteousness unto God.

(Rom. 6.12-13)

In terms of this metaphor, the limbs of the body are seen as weapons, potentially employed for good or evil, for or against the individual of whom they are part. The use to which the weapons are put depends on the motivation of the wearer.

St Paul's use of the metaphor of armour to express the equivocalness of the body should not be seen in isolation but as part of his complete theology. The body is central to his thought concerning man's redemption. As J.A.T. Robinson comments, "one could say without exaggeration that the concept of the body forms the keystone of Paul's theology".<sup>5</sup> The apostle sees the body as undergoing changes as man progresses towards salvation. Before the advent of Christ it is the body "of sinne and death".<sup>6</sup> As a result of the

4. I omit here the Epistle to the Ephesians, which deals more with the individual elements of a suit-of-arms rather than armour in its entirety. I return to the Ephesians passage in Section 2 of this chapter.

5. J.A.T. Robinson, The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology (S.C.M. Press, 1952), p. 9.

6. Marginal gloss in the Geneva Bible to Romans 7.24. All quotations from the Bible are from the Geneva  
/Continued over

Incarnation, when Christ put on our flesh, we can share substance with Him, "for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one bodie" (I.Cor.12.13), although we are still liable to temptation and sin. Finally, through Christ's death and resurrection, the process of becoming one in body with Him can be perfected at the Last Judgement, when "we [shall] all mete together ... unto a perfite man" (Eph.4.13). And this perfect man, of whom Christ is the head, will be immortal: when "this mortal hath put on immortalitie, then shall be broght to passe the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up into victorie" (I.Cor.15.54). In short, the body is itself transformed, and has three distinct modes corresponding to the phases of human history: before the Incarnation; between that and the Last Judgement; and thereafter.

Commentators on St Paul, from the early Patristic writers to Spenser's own period, recognised his stress on the amoral and equivocal quality of the body, and developed St Paul's martial metaphor. St John Chrysostom writes,

The body then is indifferent between vice and virtue, as also instruments are. But either effect is wrought by him that useth

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Footnote 6 continued from page 166.

Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison, Milwaukee: Wisconsin U.P., 1969).

it ... For the fault is not laid to the suit of armour, but to those that use it to an ill end. And this one may say of the flesh too, which becomes this or that owing to the mind's decision, not owing to its own nature. 7

St John Chrysostom recognises the use of the metaphor to represent the body and develops particularly the body's ambivalence and the individual's responsibility to use it virtuously. In Spenser's own time, Hieronymous Lauretus agrees with this interpretation of the Epistle, and solidifies the metaphor into a symbol:

The arms of justice and iniquity which is to say our bodies and limbs. 8

Lauretus provides other biblical authorities as well, but his principal source remains the Epistle to the Romans.

### iii

It is immediately noticeable that the Red Cross Knight's battle with the Dragon follows a pattern closely similar to that noted in the Apostle's theology

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7. The Homilies of St John Chrysostom on the Epistle of S. Paul to the Romans (1838; 3rd edition, revised, 1887), p. 169.
  8. Hieronymous Lauretus, Sylva allegoriarum totius sacrae scripturae, 2 vols. (Venice, 1575). Vol. 1, p. 122: "Arma justitiae et iniquitatis dicuntur corpora nostra et membra".

of the body. Like that theology, the battle is divided into three stages, the divisions being marked by the Knight's two falls: firstly into "the well of life" (I.xi.29.9); and secondly to sleep blissfully beneath "the tree of life" (I.xi.46.9).

The result of these falls is not just the regeneration of the Knight to his original state, but the strengthening and enhancing of both man and armour. After his baptism in the well, the renewal of the Knight is conveyed by a simile drawing attention to his outward appearance and attributes:

As Eagle fresh out of the Ocean wave,  
Where he hath left his plumes all hoary gray,  
And deckt himselfe with feathers youthly gay,  
Like Eyas hauke up mounts unto the skies,  
His newly budded pineons to assay,  
And marveilles at himselfe, still as he flies:  
So new this new-borne knight to battell new did  
rise.  
(I.xi.34.2-9)

The repetitions of the alexandrine stress the newness of the Knight, who is now able to wound the Dragon seriously for the first time.

Adopting an ignorant persona, Spenser tentatively suggests several reasons for the Knight's success, beginning with his arms:

I wote not, whether the revenging steele  
Were hardned with that holy water dew,  
Wherein he fell, or sharper edge did feelee  
(I.xi.36.1-3)

Although presented as a speculation, the transformation of the armour is a result of immersion in the "well of life". This transformation closely corresponds to

the first alteration in the nature of the body resulting, according to St Paul, from baptism. As Robinson summarises, "The resurrection of the body starts at baptism when a Christian becomes 'one Spirit' (i.e., one spiritual body) with the Lord (I.Cor.6.17), and 'puts on (the body of) Christ' (Gal.3.27), 'the new man', which 'hath been created' (Eph.4.24) and is being renewed ... after the image of him that created him' (Col.3.10)" (p. 79). The emphasis is on renewal, regeneration, and transformation, rather than outright substitution. Like the Red Cross Knight's armour, the same body remains, but it is transformed and possesses new powers and capacities.

On the second day of the Dragon-fight, the battle centres on the Knight's armour. And it is only on this second day that the armour can bear interpretation as the Christian armour of Ephesians. On the first day, as Kaske notes, the armour defies such a reading. But we should not, as a result, seek a completely different interpretation for the first day: we must merely see the Ephesians passage in the context of St Paul's overall use of the martial metaphor. Until the Knight is baptised and becomes a Christian, he cannot wield the weapons of a Christian man. Reading the armour with St Paul as representing the body, the Knight's limbs cannot become weapons of righteousness until they are transformed from the body "of sinne and death" through baptism. Until then the body remains a

deeply flawed weapon in the fight against evil, a weapon easily turned against the individual.

iv

Consideration of St Paul's use of the martial metaphor is necessary to enable us to evaluate other attempts to dispel uncertainty over the meaning of the Red Cross Knight's armour. Chief among these is Carol V. Kaske's suggestion that, for the first day of the Dragon-fight alone, the Knight's armour represents the Mosaic Law.<sup>9</sup> In a stimulating and erudite article containing voluminous references to supporting material, this interpretation alone remains unsupported.

Although she supplies examples of authors regarding the Law as aggravating sin, Kaske can offer no corroboration for her interpretation of the armour as the Law.

Indeed, some of her own authorities, including St Paul and Lauretus, suggest instead the interpretation given above, of the armour as representative of the body.<sup>10</sup>

I single out her interpretation of the first day because, as she says, hers is the first attempt at a detailed explication of the battle; and because her discussion highlights the demands made upon any reading.

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9. Kaske, pp. 622-23.

10. Romans 6.13; Lauretus, p. 122.

Kaske is right to draw our attention to the ambivalence of the armour and alternative suggestions must seek to accommodate that ambivalence. (A cogent argument against her own is that it requires us to isolate the first day rather than discover a consistent solution.) She is also correct in locating the crux in the stanzas describing the Knight's reaction to the fiery breath of the Dragon:

The scorching flame sore swinged all his face,  
And through his armour all his bodie seard,  
That he could not endure so cruell cace,  
But thought his armes to leave, and helmet to  
unlace.  
(I.xi.26.6-9)

Faint, wearie, sore, emboyled, grieved, brent  
With heat, toyle, wounds, armes, smart and  
inward fire  
That never man such mischiefes did torment;  
Death better were, death did he oft desire,  
But death will never come, when needes require.  
(I.xi.28.1-5)

Occurring to either side of an epic simile, these passages describe the Knight's reactions to the Dragon's "flake of fire". They are different in that the former expresses a physical desire to remove the armour, the latter a spiritual desire for death. But this difference only exists if we read stanza twenty-six literally. Read allegorically, the Knight's attempt to remove his armour may be seen as foreshadowing the explicit death-wish of stanza twenty-eight. The armour he "thought ... to leave" represents a body which, infected with sin and death, has become intolerable. The close association of armour





The witty, punning quality of the line heightens the sense of paradox, a paradox which is pointless if the armour on the first day is in no way connected with the armour at any other time. The underlying irony Spenser expresses is that the body was "created according to the image of God"; that is, "in righteousness, and true holiness" (Eph. 4.24 and marginal gloss; compare Genesis 1.26 and gloss. The Knight is, of course, the patron of Holiness). The body, created in the likeness of God and thus in perfection, has become through the Fall the chief weapon in the armoury of sin and death. Thus it is on the first day that the armour which should have protected him becomes the instrument of the Knight's torture.

## v

On the first day of the Dragon-fight, then, we are shown the Red Cross Knight failing to harm his enemy and finally being vanquished through his burning armour. In non-allegorical terms, the Knight is vanquished because he is in the pre-Christian state. He is reliant on his own resources, and they are insufficient. Ultimately, his body is infected and it is through the body that he is defeated.

As a result of his baptism in the well of life the Knight becomes a more serious opponent for the

Dragon. The simile comparing the "new-borne knight" to an eagle, quoted above, confirms that on the second day the Knight is no longer reliant on his powers alone. A.C. Hamilton refers us to Spenser's probable source for this simile, Isaiah 40.31:<sup>12</sup>

But they that waite upon the Lord, shal renue  
their strength: they shal lift up the wings  
as the egles: they shal runne, and not be  
wearie, and they shal walke and not faint.

Apt though this is, the previous verse is perhaps even more instructive, because it (and the Geneva Bible gloss) confirm that the change in the Knight concerns his self-reliance:

Even the yong men shal faint, and be  
wearie, and the yong men shal stumble and fall.  
(40.30)

The gloss explains that "They that trust in their owne vertue, and do not acknowledge that all cometh of God" are those intended by the young men. Their fall has similarities with that of the Red Cross Knight (even verbal similarities in the use of "faint" and "wearie" in stanza twenty-eight).

The Knight's previous career has provided evidence of just this presumptuous confidence, implicitly in his adventures after abandoning Una, and explicitly in his first battle. When he approaches Errour's cave, he arrogantly dismisses Una's warning: "Vertue gives her selfe light, through darknesse for

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12. The Faerie Queene ed. ~~A.C.~~ Hamilton, p. 150.

to wade" (I.i.12.9). Spenser deflates the Knight humorously by describing how "his glistring armor made / A litle glooming light, much like a shade" (I.i.14.4-5). Later, when he is being crushed by the monster, it is only through Una's exhortation "Add faith unto your force, and be not faint" (I.i.19.3) that he manages to break free. Only then does the Red Cross Knight "acknowledge that all cometh of God" and thus gain the strength to overcome Errour. This process, of becoming Christian and thus able to rely on more than solely human powers, is again represented in the Knight's baptism and the simile of the rejuvenated eagle.

vi

However, the Knight falls again on the second day; and this too may be understood in the light of St Paul's theology of the body.

The second fall is quite different from the first. The Knight is no longer burned in his armour, the Dragon does not brush him aside contemptuously with its tail. Instead the Knight stumbles while undertaking a tactical withdrawal to avoid the effects of the fiery breath, the very weapon that defeated him on the first day:

The heate whereof, and harmfull pestilence  
So sore him noyd, that forst him to retire

A little backward for his best defence,  
 To save his bodie from the scorching fire,  
 Which he from hellish entrailes did expire.  
 It chaunst (eternall God that chaunce did  
 guide)

As he recoiled backward, in the mire  
 His nigh forwearied feeble feet did slide,  
 And downe he fell, with dread of shame sore  
 terrifide.  
 (I.xi.45)

The phrase "A little backward for his best defence" is sufficient to illustrate the difference from the Knight's uncontrolled frenzy at the end of the first day. And the parenthesis in the sixth line confirms the Knight's dependence on God for his safety.<sup>13</sup>

Yet he falls. Despite the regeneration of the Knight and the change from the body of sin and death to that of a baptised Christian, the process by which he becomes one in Christ is not yet completed. As St Paul says, it will only be completed at the Last Judgement:

Beholde, I shewe you a secret thing,  
 We shal not all slepe, but we shal all be  
 changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye  
 at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shal  
 blowe, and the dead shal be raised up incor-  
 ruptible, and we shal be changed ...

So when this corruptible hath put on  
 incorruption, this mortal hath put on  
 immortalitie, then shal be broght to passe  
 the saying that is written, Death is  
 swallowed up into victorie.

(I.Cor. 15.51-54)

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13. Compare this with the parenthetical explanation of the Knight's first fall: "It fortun'd (as faire it then befell)" (I.xi.29.1), in which the neutral pronoun stresses the absence of a benevolent, over-seeing individual Saviour.

Robinson comments, "the completion of the transformation must wait upon the day of the Parousia even for the faithful" (p. 80). Although a Christian warrior on the second day, the Red Cross Knight remains a mortal, and a mortal by definition cannot defeat death. But his second fall leaves him below the "tree of life" which seems to symbolise not only the tree of the Garden of Eden, but also the cross of the crucifixion and resurrection. On the final day, after this second transformation, the Knight is in this perfected state and is able to despatch his enemy with little difficulty. Significantly, the Knight fatally wounds the Dragon through its mouth: as it approaches the Knight "him to have swallowd quight" (I.xi.53.2), the Dragon itself is "swalowed up into victorie".

Interpreted thus, the Red Cross Knight is never equated with Christ, even on the final day. Despite Hamilton's praise that Kaske has "raised to a new level of understanding" the debate about the Knight's ultimate standing, her final formulation that the Knight is "Christ the perfect man" seems unsubtle and curiously inverted.<sup>14</sup> As Rosemond Tuve remarked, "Red Crosse 'figures' Christ, but is never equated with Him".<sup>15</sup> If we read the battle in terms of St Paul's

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14. The Faerie Queene ed. ~~A.C.~~ Hamilton, p. 26.

15. Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 404.

theology of the body, we may suggest that the Knight, as a result of Christ's death and resurrection, has become part of Christ the perfect man: not Christ, but in Christ, to use St Paul's phrase.<sup>16</sup> The Knight does not lose his identity as St George; instead that identity is enhanced and transformed in the course of the battle. As Nature says of things affected by Mutability, by change his being has dilated until he reaches perfection (VII.vii.58). Perfection for man is to become in Christ as the Red Cross Knight does on the third day of his final battle.

## vii

Although particularly applicable to the final Dragon-fight, the Pauline context for the Red Cross Knight's armour may be of significance elsewhere. An obvious instance is when Sir Guyon takes up the cause of Ruddymane; doing so, he lifts up the armour of Mordant, the child's father:

But his sad fathers armes with bloud defilde,  
An heavie load himselfe did lightly reare  
(II.ii.11.3-4)

As well as the Pauline metaphor, the ambiguity of "himselfe" tells us, as Alastair Fowler has noted, that

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16. en Christo. On the significance of this phrase for St Paul, see Robinson, p. 46.



the arms are an allegory of "his own flesh with its unavoidable sin and decay".<sup>17</sup>

But a more difficult passage to interpret is the enchanter Archimago's assumption of an imitation of the Red Cross Knight's arms in order to deceive Una:

But now seemde best, the person to put on  
 Of that good knight, his late beguiled guest:  
 In mighty armes he was yclad anon,  
 And silver shield: upon his coward brest  
 A bloody crosse, and on his craven crest  
 A bouch of haire discoloured diversly:  
 Fully jolly knight he seemde, and well adrest,  
 And when he sate upon his courser free,  
Saint George himself ye would have deemed him  
 to be.  
 (I.ii.11)

Una is fooled by the imitation; but later Archimago is defeated and sorely wounded by Sans loy:

But that proud Paynim forward came so fierce,  
 And full of wrath, that with his sharp-head  
 speare  
 Through vainely crossed shield he quite did  
 pierce  
 (I.iii.35.1-3)

When Archimago is such a convincing copy of the Knight, why is his shield "vainely crossed"?

The answer lies perhaps in the description of his transformation, the wording of which recalls certain passages in which St Paul urges the transformation of the Christian. The phrase "put on" (line 1), which occurs nowhere else in this sense in The Faerie Queene,

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17. "The Image of Mortality: The Faerie Queene, II. i-ii", HLQ 24 (1960-1961), p. 103.

is used by St Paul in particular to convey the three interrelated processes which I have suggested lie at the heart of Spenser's meaning in the Red Cross Knight's armour: the change from the Old Man to the New; the process of becoming one with Christ; and the taking of the armour of the Christian warrior. We are exhorted to "Put on the whole armour of God" (Eph. 6.11), to "put on Christ (Gal. 3.27), and finally, to

put on the new man, which after God is  
created in righteousness, and true holiness.  
(Eph. 4.24)

At the very beginning of the poem, the Knight is named as "The Patron of true Holinesse" (I.i.Arg.1), a reference which seems to have escaped the poem's editors. Spenser echoes the phrasing of the Epistles in order to point the difference between Archimago's action and that of a true Christian. As we expect of Hypocrisy, the enchanter takes merely the outward show: there is irony in the discrepancy between what Archimago means by "the person to put on / Of that good knight" and what the phrase means to the true Christian. Archimago, with his beads and carelessly strewn Ave Marias, is false Holiness. His is an external imitation, possessing none of the transforming inner reality; and hence his shield is "vainely crossed".

This episode confirms the point made concerning the "treacherous armour" of the first day of

the Dragon-fight. Both body and armour, to use St John Chrysostom's phrase, are "indifferent between vice and virtue" and become "this or that according to the mind's decision". Returning to the invocation to canto eleven, which Kaske thought could not apply to the first day, the poet asks

That I this man of God his godly armes may  
blaze.  
(I.xi.7.9)

It is only when the armour is that of a Christian, a man of God, that the arms are "godly". When the Red Cross Knight departs from his essential union with Christ the armour ceases to be godly and becomes instead a potential liability.

#### viii

I have mentioned the unusual persona Spenser adopts for the duration of this battle and his feigned ignorance of the source of the Knight's growing powers. The invocation to the canto, itself abnormally placed several stanzas in from the beginning, also suggests a poet unsure of his abilities:

O gently come into my feeble brest ...

That I this man of God his godly armes may  
blaze.  
(I.xi.6.1; 7.9)

There may be more to this than traditional, conventional modesty. Spenser casts himself in a role not unlike that of the Red Cross Knight in the Letter to

Raleigh; as a "clownishe younge poet", perhaps. Like the Knight in the course of the battle, Spenser says he needs inspiration in order to tell this tale, something beyond his natural capacity. The inspiration is to come from the Muse directly, indirectly from God.

The implication is that Spenser is here comparing the Christian soldier and the Christian poet. This comparison is present in the description of the Muse:

0 gently come into my feeble brest,  
Come gently, but not with that mighty rage,  
Wherewith the martiall troupes thou doest  
infest,  
And harts of great Heroës doest enrage  
But now a while let downe that haughtie  
string,  
And to my tunes thy second tenor rayse  
(I.xi.6.1-4; 7.7-8)

The same muse inspires the poet and the warrior. Spenser gives the poets the second string; but if the pun may be forgiven, they are on the same lute. The fact that poets and soldiers rise above their normal selves in the same way suggests that the two groups are related.

This is not to suggest that Book One of The Faerie Queene is in any way an allegorised autobiography. But it does suggest that Spenser sees analogies between the role of a Christian warrior and that of a Christian poet. In attempting to achieve his own goal, which Spenser frequently compares with reaching the end of a quest or journey, the poet too

runs risks, often falling on the way, and only manages to tell of the final battle through external, supernatural aid. The analogy between Knight and poet, quest and poem, is explicit here; but it has perhaps been implicit from the very beginning. The Red Cross Knight's first opponent, his own Errour, does not spew out misused weapons as we might expect:

Her vomit full of bookes and papers was.  
(I.i.20.6)

## Section Two: Elements of Armour

### i

Underlying Spenser's use of martial symbolism is St Paul's metaphor of "the whole armour of God"; it is continuously present, but only rarely referred to explicitly. Instead, because of the underlying metaphor, Spenser is able to draw on the specific enumeration of the parts of the Christian soldier's arms and weapons. The central text here, of course, is that cited in the Letter to Raleigh, St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians:

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the assaults of the devil . . . .

For this cause take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to resist in the evil daye, and having finished all things, stand fast.

Stand therefore, and your loines girde  
about with veritie, and having on the brest  
plate of righteousnes,

And your fete shod with the preparation  
of the Gospel of peace.

Above all, take the shield of faith,  
wherewith ye may quench all the fyrie dartes  
of the wicked,

And take the helmet of salvation, and  
the sworde of the Spirit, which is the worde  
of God.

(Ephesians 6.11-16)

Unlike many of the authors who had used this text before him, Spenser manages to integrate these weapons into his own work of art. St Paul's metaphor becomes his metaphor as he breathes fresh life into it. One may compare The Faerie Queene with Jean de Carthenay's Wandering Knight, which has been suggested as a source for Book One.<sup>18</sup> Carthenay equips his hero, first with an evil armour of vices; then, on the hero's repentance, rearms him in the Pauline manner. But the arms are mere labels; they exist, that is all. Carthenay's knight never uses or loses them, they are lifeless attributes. But as we shall see, the Red Cross Knight's weapons seem almost to become participants, such is our sense of their involvement in the action.

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The integration of the weapons in the poem can

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18. Jean Cartigny [or de Carthenay], The Wandring Knight, ed. Dorothy Atkinson Evans (Seattle: Washington U.P., 1951). See Evans's comments, pp. xliii-xlvii.

be seen in the very first encounter between two knights. The Red Cross Knight's battle with Sans foy only becomes comprehensible if we study the blows received and the weapons used.

The battle is generally described, with honours shared, until Sans foy curses the Knight:

Curse on that Crosse (quoth then the Sazarin)  
That keepes thy body from the bitter fit;  
(I.ii.18.1-2)

Sans foy correctly locates the source of the Knight's strength. In doing so he is, in a sense, the first interpreter of the armour. His curse brings the armour to the forefront of our attention by alluding to its non-literal meaning. There is an immediate change of focus: the blows cease to be generalised and become specific and detailed. It is as if the poet can use the detailed symbolism of the armour only now that he has alerted us to its existence:

Therewith upon his crest  
With rigour so outrageous he [Sans foy] smitt,  
That a large share it hewd out of the rest,  
And glauncing downe his shield, from blame him  
fairely blest.  
(I.ii.18.6-9)

Roused, the Red Cross Knight delivers the final blow.

He

at his haughtie helmet making mark,  
So hugely stroke, that it the steele did rive,  
And cleft his head.

(I.ii.19.3-5)

These are the only detailed blows of the battle and critics have rightly seen them as crucial to our



understanding of this encounter. A.C. Hamilton has suggested that this exchange relates to the earlier description of the Red Cross Knight's anger: "Sans-foy's blow hews a large piece from his helmet - his eye of reason being blinded".<sup>19</sup> Hamilton gives no reason for connecting Sans foy's blow and the earlier line: "The eye of reason was with rage yblent" (I.ii. 5.7); one is left to infer that he sees some association of the helmet and the reasoning faculty. But this association is unnecessary; and besides, rage is a mere peccadillo beside the other faults the Knight has displayed up to this point.

Hamilton is right however in pointing to the significance of the helmet. Recalling St Paul's allegorisation, we recognise that the Knight is probably wearing the "helmet of salvation" (Eph. 6.17) or of the "hope of salvation" (I. Thess. 5.8). But it is not enough merely to identify, as though we were reading Carthenay. The description of the blow combines with the symbolism of the armour to take us deeper into Spenser's meaning. The "share" hewn out of the helmet has as its primary meaning "part" or "piece".<sup>20</sup> The

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19. A.C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in "The Faerie Queene", p. 64. In his edition of the poem, Hamilton revises his opinion somewhat, but persists in this unsupported association of the helmet and the "eye of reason", p. 48.

20. OED Share sb3<sup>1</sup>.

loss of a share of the helmet of salvation may carry the same sense as this passage from Revelations:

God shal take away his parte out of the  
Boke of life, and out of the holie citie  
(Rev. 22.19)

The Saracen's blow expresses symbolically the diminished quality of the Knight subsequent to his loss of faith in and abandonment of Una. Indeed his whole encounter with Sans foy may be seen as expressing the Knight's religious struggle. Sans foy is not an external force, whom the Knight happens to encounter and who happens to be able to attack him because of his earlier rage. The Knight's meeting with Sans foy is a direct result of his slide away from faith into a growing faithlessness in the previous one and a half cantos. The battle, in the manner of a psychomachia, is an externalisation of the Red Cross Knight's spiritual state. The Pagan can successfully attack the "helmet of salvation" not because the Knight's "eye of reason was with rage yblent" but because the blow symbolises the Knight's loss of his essential faith.

### iii

The relationship I have suggested between the Red Cross Knight and Sans foy is confirmed by the similarity of their injuries. Sans foy's blow shears away part of the Knight's helmet. The Knight's return

blow is exactly similar, being aimed at the crest. But it is much more effective: he splits his opponent's helmet and skull. The difference is obviously one of degree not kind: though diminished, the Knight retains enough faith, in the shape of his shield which "from blame him fairely blest", to ward off death; whereas by definition Sans foy does not.

The manner of Sans foy's death reinforces this relationship, making him seem more and more an exaggerated and distorted reflection of the Red Cross Knight:

He tumbling downe alive,  
With bloudy mouth his mother earth did kis,  
Greeting his grave:

(I.ii.19.5-7)

His death is almost a parody of the Red Cross Knight's birth and discovery, the legend of which appears in canto eleven. He is told that the Faery who abducted him

thee brought into this Faerie lond,  
And in an heaped furrow did thee hyde,  
Where thee a Ploughman all unweeting fond,  
As he his toylesome teme that way did guyde,  
And brought thee up in ploughmans state to  
byde,

Whereof Georgos he thee gave to name;  
(I.x.66.1-6)

The Red Cross Knight was found as if born of the earth in a furrow. Spenser has probably derived his etymology from the Golden Legend, which explains

George is sayd of geos, whiche is as moche  
to saye as erthe and orge, that is tilyenge,  
so george is to saye as tilyenge the erthe,

that is his flesshe.<sup>21</sup>

Significantly the first time Spenser uses the name St George for his Knight is immediately prior to the encounter with Sans foy (I.ii.11.9; 12.2). The latter's grimly funny death, more reminiscent of a modern war poet than the sugary Spenser of Romantic criticism, is an inversion of the Knight's birth. The parody confirms the relationship between these two, developing our sense of the peril of St George's soul.

iv

The symbolism of the helmet recurs in the ninth canto. The Red Cross Knight and Una see Sir Trevisan fleeing Despair, and "perceive his head / To be unarmd" (I.ix.22.1-2). Before Trevisan explains his flight his unarmed head conveys his sin: he lacks the "helmet, the hope of salvation" (I. Thess. 5.8). Spenser relies on the reader's knowledge of the Pauline armour, for without this knowledge the absence of the helmet would be meaningless.

When we reach Despair's cave there is further mention of weapons. Sir Trevisan had accepted a rope

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21. The Golden Legend in the Appendix to Andrew Barclay, The Life of St George ed. William Nelson (Oxford: Clarendon Press for EETS, 1955), p. 112. I have modernised the punctuation.

as his means of self-destruction, a rope being a traditional symbol of despair following the death of Judas Iscariot. But the Red Cross Knight refuses a rope, taking like the dead Sir Terwin a knife. This, one assumes, is not the Erasmian "lytell hanger" in the armoury of a Christian man of the Enchiridion militis christi!<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless it is an appropriate weapon in two ways.

The knife is twice described as rusty (I.ix. 29.9; 36.8), and A.C. Hamilton assumes that Spenser means by this that it is bloody.<sup>23</sup> He is obviously correct to an extent, but the mere substitution of one word for another is reductive, failing to take account of the moral connotations of Spenser's original word.

In earlier poetry, both Chaucer and Hoccleve seem to imply moral corruption in their use of the word "rust". Hoccleve's irresponsible cleric "recketh never how rusty ben his schepe";<sup>24</sup> and Chaucer's narrator in the Canterbury Tales remarks,

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22. Enchyridion militis christi (1533; facsimile edition, Amsterdam: De Capo Press, 1969), sig. Ciiiiir.

23. The Faerie Queene ed. ~~A.C.~~ Hamilton, p. 125.

24. "The Regement of Princes" in The Works of Thomas Hoccleve, 3 vols., ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (EETS ES 73, 1897). Vol. 3, p. 52.

For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,  
 No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;  
 (Prol. 501-2)

Both poets imply moral and religious corruption by the word, degeneration resulting from the slackness and laziness of the clergy. In the sixteenth century, the evil connotations of rust appear in the Countess of Pembroke's version of Psalm CXL:

Preserve me, Lord, preserve me, sett me free  
 From men that be  
 Soe vile, soe violent:  
 In whose entent  
 Both force and fraud doth lurk  
 My bane to work:  
 Whose tongues are sharper things  
 Then adders stings,  
 Whose rusty lipps enclose  
 A pois'nous sword, such in the aspick growes.<sup>25</sup>  
 (11. 1-10)

In this splendidly terse and intense rendering, the translator seizes on the natural redness of lips, as perhaps Spenser does on that of blood, to introduce the evil, corrupting connotations of rust. Interestingly, the Psalmist later in this poem draws on the Old Testament metaphor of the armour of God, the basis of St Paul's, apostrophising Him as "the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered mine head in the daie of battel".<sup>26</sup> The Psalmist, like St Paul, associates salvation and a helmet.

We are accustomed to finding rusty weapons in

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25. The Psalms of David, tr. Sir Philip Sidney and the Countess of Pembroke (1823), p. 269.

26. Geneva version, Psalm 140, verse 7.

happier circumstances in The Faerie Queene. When Prince Arthur and Sir Arthegall arrive at Mercilla's court, they see that

at her feet her sword was ... layde,  
Whose long rest rusted the bright steely brand;  
(V.ix.30.6-7)

The rust here is a sign of disuse. But disuse is two-edged. It can either reflect a just peacefulness and tranquillity as at Mercilla or Elizabeth I's court; or it can indicate a culpable failure to act.<sup>27</sup> In Despair's cave this latter sense is implied. Una, finding her Knight knife in hand, reproaches him:

Fie, fie, faint harted knight,  
What meanest thou by this reprochfull strife?  
Is this the battell, which thou vauntst to  
fight  
With that fire-mouthed Dragon, horrible and  
bright?  
(I.ix.52.6-9)

Her cause for complaint is just this failure to act. And her stress on his failure to perform his mission is particularly fitting in the Cave because of the connection perceived in the Middle Ages and Renaissance between despair and sloth.<sup>28</sup> Just this connection between sloth and a rusting blade is made in Lydgate's

27. See William Nelson, "Queen Elizabeth, Spenser's Mercilla, and a Rusty Sword", Renaissance News 18 (1965), pp. 113-17.

28. See Ariel Sachs, "Religious Despair in Medieval Literature and Art", Medieval Studies 26 (1964), pp. 231-56, especially pp. 234-37. Nelson notes the connection between rust and sloth but finds no uses of this connection in The Faerie Queene ("Queen Elizabeth, Spenser's Mercilla, and a Rusty Sword", p. 114).



translation of Deguileville's Pilgrimage of the Life of

Man. The Net-Maker tells the Pilgrim,

So as a swerd (I dar expresse,)
 Yffadyed ys off hys bryhtnesse,
 And off hys clernessee ek also,
 Whan men take noon hed ther-to,
 But rusteth and ffareth al amys,
 Ryght so a man that ydel ys,
 And kan hym sylff nat occupye,
 (By resemblaunce thow mayst espye,)
 In-to hys sowle (thus I be-gynne)
 The rust off vyces or off synne
 Doth a-way (wyth-oute gesse) 29
 Offe all e vertu the clernessee;
 (11. 1143-54)

As when the Red Cross Knight entered Errour's den at the beginning of Book One, the Net-Maker links virtue and the brightness of arms and armour. The dulling rust on the blade, signifying moral degeneration and disuse, also suggests the psychological paralysis associated with despair. As well as conveying the bloodiness of the blade, the rust is a symbolic equivalent of Una's explicit condemnation of the Knight.

There is no mention of a knife in the Pauline armoury and this point is itself revealing. Knives are associated with treachery and guile, as in The Knight's Tale: "the smylere with the knyfe under the cloke" (1. 1999). Even suicides are normally represented with ropes or swords, daggers being more rarely

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29. The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man ed. F.J. Furnivall (EETS, 1899), pp. 312-13.

used.<sup>30</sup> Such a weapon is hardly that of an heroic Christian knight. The choice of weapon in this instance seems designed to underline the incongruity of the Red Cross Knight's intended suicide and his Christian chivalry. The unchivalric weapon he accepts shows how far he has fallen from that ideal.

## v

As has been mentioned before, armour in Book One of The Faerie Queene is sometimes as conspicuous in its absence as in its presence. This is perhaps obviously true in the case of the Red Cross Knight's defeat by Orgoglio, when the Knight is caught

Disarmed all of yron-coted Plate  
(I.vii.2.8)

But Spenser's use of the absence of armour is often much more subtle. As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, Carol V. Kaske complained that the Knight's armour on the first day of his Dragon-fight could not possibly be "the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul". True enough; and close

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30. See Katzenellenbogen, plates 72a and b. However, a recent edition of The Spanish Tragedy asserts that a knife is a common symbol of Suicide, although I find little trace of it. The only evidence given in this edition is, ironically, The Faerie Queene. See Minor Elizabethan Tragedies, ed. T.W. Craik (Dent, 1974), p. 164.

attention to Spenser's description of the battle reveals that it is not.

The justification for this remark lies not in what Spenser says but in which he does not say. For most of the first day the Knight uses the spear, a weapon not allegorised by St Paul. It is largely ineffective and the Dragon demonstrates this weapon's inadequacy when

he snatcht the wood,  
And quite a sunder broke [it].  
(I.xi.22.2-3)

Nor are the Knight's defences any more successful: when the infuriated Dragon looses its "flake of fire", the Knight seems to have no protection and makes no attempt to ward off the consequences.

These points only become noticeable when we compare the first and second days. On the first day, the Knight's armour does not play a major part in the battle and is not eulogised as Spenser says it will be. Apart from the uselessness of the spear, it remains largely "unblazed". But on the second day, the principal events take place around the armour. The most important section of the conflict is the struggle for the shield, which is really the decisive point of the entire battle.

The single most significant point to be noted here is the shield's mere presence. On the first day it is never mentioned; yet it is the Red Cross Knight's

most important weapon and precisely that with which he should have countered the Dragon's "flake of fire", as St Paul says:

Above all, take the shield of faith,  
wherewith ye may quench all the fyrie dartes  
of the wicked

(Eph. 6.16)

On the first day, this central element in the Christian armour is effectively not present. But on the second day the shield assumes the prominence accorded to it by St Paul; and it is as the all-important element in the Christian warrior's armoury that it is fought over.

As suggested earlier, Spenser uses the Knight's armour and its changing significance to indicate developments in the Knight's religious state. On the first day of the dragon-fight, the shield is silently omitted because the Knight is in a faithless condition. But on the second day, when the armour has become that of Ephesians, the armour of a "man of God", the shield becomes the most prominent of his weapons.

## vi

Although his armour is, as we have seen, of prime importance to the Christian warrior, it is not all that is required for success in the battle against evil. As the Red Cross Knight makes clear in the war of words with Despair, military posture is also significant.

The Red Cross Knight interjects only once in Despair's long, persuasive speech, and he does so to state the case against suicide:

The knight much wondred at his suddeine wit,  
 And said, The terme of life is limited,  
 Ne may a man prolong, nor shorten it;  
 The souldier may not move from watchfull sted,  
 Nor leave his stand, untill his Captaine bed.  
 (I.ix.41.1-5)

The wording of the final metaphorical couplet, particularly in "sted" and "stand", recalls the beginning of the exhortation to the Christian warrior in the Epistle to the Ephesians, of which the description of the armour forms part. The exhortation begins, "Stand therefore" (Eph. 6.14). This phrase is picked up by biblical commentators, again most notably by St John Chrysostom who greatly develops the analogy between moral preparedness and the bearing of the Christian warrior:

Stand therefore, saith he. The very first feature in tactics is, to know how to stand well, and many things will depend on that. ... He that stands, stands upright; not in a lazy attitude, not leaning upon anything. Exact uprightness discovers itself by the way of standing, so that they who are perfectly upright, they stand. But they who do not stand, cannot be upright, but are unstrung and disjointed. ... He who knows how to stand will from his very footing, as from a sort of foundation, find every part of the conflict easy to him. 31

St John Chrysostom's interpretation brings out the full

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31. St John Chrysostom, Commentary on the Epistle to The Galatians and Homilies on the Epistle to the Ephesians (Library of the Fathers, 1879), pp. 363-64.



analogy between the posture of the soldier and the moral readiness and watchfulness of the Christian.

Although the Red Cross Knight himself states the case for "standing" and uprightness, he fails in this respect on several occasions. This is most noticeable when Orgoglio surprises him. Spenser is specific concerning the Knight's physical position throughout this episode. When Orgoglio is first heard, the Knight is "poured out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd" (I.vii.7.2); he has been lying next to Duessa by the fountain. Although he "upstarted" at the noise (7.8), he remains "inwardly dismayde, / And eke so faint in every joint and vaine" (11.6-7) that his resistance is ineffective. As St John Chrysostom says, the act of not standing, of being ill-prepared, is reflected in the Knight's lack of physical cohesion. He is literally dis-integrated and "inwardly dismayde". The giant's first blow, although it misses, creates sufficient wind to knock him over:

Yet so exceeding was the villeins powre,  
That with the wind it did him overthrow,  
And all his sences stound, that still he lay  
full low.  
(I.vii.12.7-9)

He returns to the position, prone on the ground, in which he was at the beginning of the battle. The unreadiness of the Knight, his physical and moral unpreparedness for conflict, is symbolised by his inability to stand.

Furthermore, when dallying with Duessa he was "disarmed all of yron-coted Plate" (I.vii.2.8). As well as abandoning his military bearing, he has put off the weapons he was exhorted to bear as a Christian soldier. The lack of armour and weapons, proneness, and a certain fluidity are all summed up in the line, "poured out in loosnesse on the grassy ground". The dangerous fluidity of the Knight's state is often referred to: he and Duessa "bathe in pleasaunce" (4.2), and his "chearefull bloud in faintnesse chill did melt" (6.8). The Knight is "dismayde" in mind and body, lacking the moral and muscular integrity necessary for combat. In his pun on "dismayde", alluding to both the physical and psychological or spiritual states, Spenser provides a miniature of his development of the martial metaphor. He breathes life into the long-dead metaphor employing physical states to express internal conditions. It is the very metaphor the Red Cross Knight uses to counter Despair's arguments; with typical Spenserian irony, the Knight enacts his own metaphor.

The Knight's riposte to Despair may serve as an explanatory verse to a number of other episodes in The Faerie Queene. The combination of disarming, abandonment of martial stance, and fluidity reminds one immediately of those instances noted in the previous chapter when such knights as Scudamour, Cymochles,



and Mortdant have given way to lust (Section One, part three). With these we may contrast Britomart's watchfulness in rejecting Malecasta's entreaty

Her to disarm, and with delightfull sport  
To loose her warlike limbs and strong effort.  
(III.i.52.4-5)

In these lines, the distinction between the physical loosening of the limbs through the removal of constricting armour and the moral loosening implied by the abandonment of spiritual defences has almost disappeared, so closely do the metaphor's tenor and vehicle coincide.

## vii

The most prominent part of the Knight's equipment, his shield, has been mentioned in passing in the course of this chapter. It emerges in Book One as the pre-eminent symbol of the Red Cross Knight and in particular of his faith, in accordance with the shield's allegorisation in the Epistle to the Ephesians. But in that Epistle St Paul does not mention a device for the shield and the red cross is irrelevant to the meaning of faith. The red cross is, of course, closely connected with St George and with the Passion, as Spenser makes clear in his description of it:

But on his brest a bloudie Crosse he bore,  
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,  
For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he  
wore,

And dead as living ever him ador'd:  
 Upon his shield the like was also scor'd,  
 For soveraine hope, which in his helpe he had:  
 (I.i.2.1-6)

As we shall see, the association of the red cross and the Passion underlies certain episodes in Book One in which shields play a prominent part.

Discussions of Spenser's use of the iconography of the Passion are fraught with danger. Patrick Grant's Images and Themes in Literature of the English Renaissance (Macmillan, 1979) exemplifies this well. Grant suggests that the many references to the Passion in Book One can be given cohesion by being viewed in the light of a single iconographical tradition. His candidate is that of the Living Cross or, as he calls it, the effectus passionis.

His suggestion is untenable both specifically and generally. Specifically, because he explains that the effectus passionis is "a remarkable iconographic programme for depicting the crucifixion which has at its centre the animated arms of a red cross" (p. 37; my italics). One is immediately struck by the wholly inappropriate "animated arms" of the cross. Gertrude Schiller confirms that this is indeed the central and essential feature of the Living Cross tradition: "By 'Living Cross' we mean a Cross of Christ of which the four extremities end in moving hands that do not belong

to the figure of Christ".<sup>32</sup> But in The Faerie Queene there is no suggestion whatsoever of such a cross. The essential feature of this iconographical tradition is entirely absent from Spenser's poem, and it seems at least perverse to pretend it is there. Perhaps seduced by his material, Grant instructs us that we "can imagine these women [Una and Duessa] positioned on either side [of the Cross] with the left arm wounding Duessa and a right arm blessing Una while the fiend falls beneath and the Knight revives, though lying captive in hell-mouth" (pp. 50-1). We can certainly imagine it; but equally certainly, Spenser did not write it. The Living Cross tradition seems to have nothing to do with Book One of The Faerie Queene.

On his more general suggestion that a single iconographical tradition underlies the Passion symbolism of Book One, I am likewise doubtful. Such motives as the red cross, the opposition of figures associated with Ecclesia and Synagogue, and the battle with the dragon are the common property of many schemes; and it seems unnecessarily restrictive to opt for one exclusively as Spenser's source. We have no reason to suppose that the poet deliberately excluded all other traditions of the Passion from his mind. I do

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32. Gertrude Schiller, The Iconography of Christian Art, tr. Janet Seligman, Vol. 2 (Lund Humphries, 1972), p. 158.

not suggest that attention to the iconography of the Passion is unhelpful; far from it: only (and it is not after all such a minor point) that we should not decide arbitrarily and precipitately on a single tradition when Spenser gives no indication that he himself has done so.

viii

For our purposes, the most interesting point concerning the symbol of the red cross is that it appears on the shield and breastplate of the Knight; that is, it appears in an heraldic context. Moreover, in the course of Book One, the shield is contrasted with several others: those of Sans foy, Sans loy, and Sans joy; and that of Prince Arthur. In particular, there is an emphasis on shields in the Red Cross Knight's encounter with Sans foy and the events subsequent to it.

The red cross is frequently found associated with the Passion as an heraldic symbol; one need only mention the many images of the Harrowing of Hell in which Christ bears a red cross pennant. But the association of cross and shield occurs specifically in the iconographical traditions of the arma christi. The arma christi are the instruments of the Passion and include such items as the Crown of Thorns, the Spear of Longinus, and the nails. But the central image is that

of the Cross. In this complex of traditions the instruments represent not only the suffering of Christ, but act also as "symbols of [Christ's] triumph and authority".<sup>33</sup> This latter meaning is no doubt the origin of the heraldic use of the arma christi; as Gertrude Schiller remarks, "arma also means 'arms' and in fact they were also seen as Christ's arms and were represented in the form of a shield or coat-of-arms".<sup>34</sup> The Red Cross Knight bears the red cross in an heraldic context too; it appears on his shield as the "glorious badge" of his "dying Lord" (I.i.2.2-3).

It may be significant to the interpretation of the battles with Sans foy and Sans joy that the red cross is thus the badge of Christ, and possibly related to the arma christi. Having defeated Sans foy, the Red Cross Knight rides off in pursuit of Duessa,

Bidding the Dwarf with him to bring away  
The Sarazins shield, signe of the conqueroure.  
(I.ii.20.6-7)

The Knight's right to spoil the dead is in doubt in The Faerie Queene.<sup>35</sup> Yet there is a more serious moral

33. Schiller, Vol. 2, p. 184.

34. Schiller, Vol. 2, p. 184.

35. Compare his action with the Palmer's later condemnation of Pyrochles and Cymochles:

To spoile the dead of weed  
Is sacrilege, and doth all sinnes exceed;  
(II.iii.16.4-5)

ambiguity present in these lines. The phrase "signe of the conqueroure" literally means that the taking of Sans foy's shield is indicative of the Red Cross Knight's victory. But Spenser's word-order implies that the "Sarazins shield" is itself the "signe of the conqueroure". In other words there is a latent sense in which the "great shield" on which "was writ ... Sans foy" (I.ii.12.7-8) is an appropriate emblem for the winner of the battle. Earlier in this chapter I suggested that the details of the combat between the Knight and Sans foy, and especially the blows to their helmets, established a relationship between them. I also suggested that on one level the battle was an externalisation of the Red Cross Knight's internal struggle to remain faithful in which he was only partially successful. We may now add that after the Knight's defeat of Sans foy he takes up the attributes of the figure he has defeated and makes them his own. He pursues Duessa as his paramour instead of Una; and takes Sans foy's shield as "signe of the conqueroure", supplanting the crux invicta, the "glorious badge" of the eternal conqueror, Christ. Hitherto the Knight had borne as his only badge the symbol of Christ's victory; it is now joined by its inverse.

The inversion of correct values culminates at the House of Pride. The Red Cross Knight and Sans joy take part in a formal joust, in which the prizes are







Illustration 7: Crucifixion Scene

emblem, the red cross. Tracing the perversion of his  
· shield and emblem enables us to perceive how far the  
Knight has strayed from the path of truth.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE ORDER OF MAIDENHEAD AND SATYRANE'S TOURNAMENT

#### Section One: Chivalry and "The Faerie Queene"

##### i

In the preceding chapters details of the knight's conduct and equipment have been considered and meanings suggested for them. But apart from the Christian knighthood of Book One, the specifically chivalric associations of the armour, weapons, and martial actions of The Faerie Queene have not yet been examined. In this and the following chapter I shall consider these associations, centring my discussion on the consciously chivalric festivals of the poem, the tournaments of Satyrane and Marinell. In these the symbolism of chivalry becomes of considerable significance; and an understanding of Spenser's meaning depends on our recognising allusions in general to the institution of knighthood and in particular to the Order of the Garter. Before embarking on this discussion, however, we must briefly consider chivalry itself and its relation to The Faerie Queene.

## ii

How seriously can we take the poem's chivalric milieu? In a sense this question underlies my dissertation. We have seen hitherto that the descriptions of knights and battles are not wholly ornamental; but what of the concept of chivalry? Is it for Spenser a literary convention and no more? This is the conclusion of scholars such as A.B. Ferguson, who argues that chivalry was moribund by Spenser's day, surviving as little more than a source for pageant costumes:

theirs was a really nostalgic, truly romantic, at times even a frivolous attempt to recreate the spirit of an irretrievable past. 1

On this estimation chivalry was the medieval plaything of the new renaissance society. Ferguson's comments have been influential; they must be considered and disagreements pointed out before we proceed.

## iii

It is not just Elizabethan chivalry which is nostalgic. Nostalgia seems virtually essential to the ethos of chivalry and almost every literary portrait of the good knight seems to be tinged with it. Two

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1. Arthur B. Ferguson, The Indian Summer of English Chivalry: Studies in the Decline and Transformation of Chivalric Idealism (Durham, North Carolina: Duke U.P., 1960), p. 226.

hundred years before the writing of The Faerie Queene, in what Ferguson would have us believe to have been the genuine chivalric age, Chaucer's "worthy knight" is presented as a relic of the past, as having fought (anachronistically) in battles of long ago, and as meriting the affection we reserve for things admirable but outmoded. Seemingly at any date, chivalry is an attempt to recreate the past. Its heroes are always distanced by time: even Sir Philip Sidney had to die before his apotheosis to the chivalric pantheon.<sup>2</sup>

A subtler and more perceptive account than Ferguson's of chivalry and the reasons for its persistence is given by J. Huizinga:

But was it only a question of literature, this third path to the sublime life, this flight from harsh reality to illusion? Surely it has been more. History pays too little attention to the influence of these dreams of a sublime life on civilization itself and on the forms of social life. The content of the ideal is a desire to return to the perfection of an imaginary past. All aspiration to raise life to that level, be it in poetry only or in fact, is an imitation. The essence of chivalry is the imitation of the ideal hero, just as the imitation of the ancient sage is the essence of humanism. 3

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2. See Roger Howell, Sir Philip Sidney: The Shepherd Knight (Hutchinson, 1968), especially pp. 1-12.
  3. J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, tr. F. Hopman (1924; reissued, Penguin, 1979), p. 37. See also Frances Yates's more specific account of the survival of the Order of the Garter in the Elizabethan period, where she makes similar points (Astraea, pp. 108-11).

Although Huizinga's comments apply primarily to the late middle ages, his account of the psychological attractions of chivalry is equally valid for that curiously mixed period in which Spenser was writing. The fact that we, with confident hindsight, judge the ideal to have been an insubstantial dream does not necessarily exclude the possibility that it was perceived as serious and attainable at the time.

Huizinga's placing of chivalry in a psychological context leads to a second point. More than in any action or set of actions, chivalry resides in a way of seeing and interpreting the world. Huizinga suggests that "the conception of chivalry constituted ... a sort of magic key, by the aid of which they explained to themselves the motives of politics and history" (p. 66). This comment implies a far deeper meaning for chivalry than that allowed by Ferguson's definition of it as a purely "military ideal" (p. 124). The latter's oversimplification is revealed in his own quotation from a tournament proclamation of Edward IV's reign, which amply supports Huizinga's description.

In this proclamation chivalry is defined as that,

by which our mother Church is defended, Kinge  
and Princes served, Realmes and Countreyes  
kept and maintained in Justice and peace. 4

Such a definition gives chivalry a role far beyond the purely military, placing it in the centre of the

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4. Ferguson, p. 16.

political and social structure of the state. That it did not, in twentieth-century estimation, really occupy this place is neither here nor there. And as to the military nature of the ideal, it would perhaps be nearer the truth to say that the chivalric mode of thought finds its characteristic literary expression through the medium of idealised military action.

iv

The word "chivalry" has a variety of meanings and we should clarify the sense in which it is used here. Ferguson, for instance, fails to distinguish between these meanings and thus becomes confused.

After Sir Thomas Elyot's generation, he writes,

it was impossible to revive the medieval knight - the man-at-arms whose primary duty was the simple protection of society, the preux chevalier in the service of holy church, of his lord, and of his lady, the debonair adulterer, the "errant" in search of adventure and renown, the landowner who left all but the lighter forms of learning to clerks - without the exercise of a conscious and historically deceptive archaism. (pp. 220-21)

This is indeed a remarkable list. The various qualities of Ferguson's medieval knight are confused and conflicting. His conception shifts from the life-like portrait of the ignorant land owner; to the lady-killing errant of the romances; and finally includes the loyal defender of the ecclesiastical and political status quo, this last being drawn from the religiously



orientated theoretical manuals of chivalry. These conceptions of chivalry must be kept separate if we are to achieve anything; if the first, the everyday behaviour, often boorish and crude, of those of knightly class, can be included in the almost philosophical concept of "chivalry" at all.

The literary chivalry of the romances and the chivalry of the theoretical manuals have points in common. Nevertheless they are differentiated by the varying emphasis they place on either the physical adventures of the knight or on his moral, political, and religious responsibilities. This difference can be seen most clearly when a writer deliberately contrasts the two; for instance, during the tournament of the Black and White Knights in the Queste de Saint Graal.<sup>5</sup> Like a good romance knight, the knight of the literary ideal, Sir Lancelot joins the underdogs, the weaker and ultimately defeated Black Knights; only to learn subsequently that in this almost theological work his correct course would have been to have aided the White Knights of celestial chivalry. In order to point the differences between the two chivalries, the writer of the Queste has had Sir Lancelot stumble into a foreign genre, in which standards other than those of the romances apply.

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5. The Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian Romances, Vol. 6, Les Aventures del Graal, pp. 100-103.

The Queste is an extreme case: Spenser was not a Cistercian as the earlier writer probably was and the contemplative withdrawal at the heart of the Queste is explicitly denied the Red Cross Knight at the Mount of Contemplation. Yet it is to the genre of theoretical, rather than romance, chivalry that The Faerie Queene ultimately belongs.

Spenser's ideal knight was to have been perfect in personal virtue; and carrying this integrity into the social context, loyal to church and monarch, lovingly protective towards the weak and poor, and justly condemnatory of evil in all its forms. This integration of personal and social virtue is central to the tradition of theoretical chivalry. Huizinga summarises Philip de Mezieres's influential regulations for a proposed order of knighthood:

The three monastic vows are to be modified for practical reasons: instead of celibacy he only requires conjugal fidelity. Mezieres adds a fourth vow, unknown to preceding orders, that of individual, moral perfection, summa perfectio. (p. 84)

Huizinga may be right that no order had officially required moral perfection before Philip de Mezieres's; but it was certainly required in the manuals of chivalry at least a century before. Ramon Lull, a profoundly influential writer, first discusses the physical conduct of a knight, but then continues:

al these thynges afore said apperteyne to a kny<sup>3</sup>t as touchyng his body; in lyke wise justice, wysedome, charite, loyalte, verite, humylite, strength, hope, swiftnes and al other vertues semblable apperteyne to a kny<sup>3</sup>t as touchyng his soule; and therefor the kny<sup>3</sup>t that useth the thinges that apperteyne to thordre of chyvalry as touchyng his body and hath none of these vertues that apperteyne to chyvalry touchyng his soule is not the frende of thordre of knyghthode. 6

Lull then goes on to state that the virtues cannot be separated from the actions of the knight. If that were true,

it shold signefye that the body and chyvalrye were bothe two to gyder contrarye to the soule and to these vertues and that is fals. (p. 32)

It is clear from these quotations that chivalry is not prized only as a vehicle for allegory by Lull but also as an ideal order in which virtue and action are combined to the benefit of a society centred on God.

It is worth repeating that this is not to deny the decline in the actual political role of the knight. As Huizinga comments,

the reason for this disproportion lies in the fact that long after nobility and feudalism had ceased to be really essential factors in the state and in society, they continued to impress the mind as dominant forms of life. (p. 54)

In other words, chivalry as a structure within the mind persisted long after its demise in the workings of

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6. Ramon Lull, The Boke of the Order of Chyvalry, tr. W. Caxton, ed. Alfred T.P. Byles (O.U.P. for EETS, 1926), pp. 31-32. I have normalised the punctuation of this quotation and that which follows.

society. This much is conveyed by the existence of Caxton's translation of Lull's Book of the Ordre of Chivalry, two centuries after its composition. Caxton, to judge by his admonitory preface, certainly thought of chivalry as a worthwhile and valuable institution for his modern world. In fact the sixteenth century saw an upsurge of interest in chivalry and not just in its more frivolous trappings. As we shall see, the register of the revitalised Order of the Garter, compiled anonymously in the reign of Henry VIII and one of the most significant chivalric documents of the age, concentrated its account of the Order on the moral and religious benefits derived from it.<sup>7</sup> At the end of the century and in the early years of the seventeenth century the scholarly and erudite works of such as Favyn and Selden still share this attitude to the values and origins of chivalry.<sup>8</sup> It is an attitude best summed up by the chronicler of the Garter's greatest rival, the Order of the Golden Fleece: Guillaume Fillastre, its

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7. The Register of the ... Order of the Garter, ed. and tr. John Anstis (1724); see especially pp. 2, 15 and 23-24.

8. See Andrew Favyn, The Theater of Honour and Knighthood [anonymously translated from the French] (1623), Book One, Chapter 1; and John Selden, Titles of Honor (1614), Preface, sigs. b3<sup>r</sup> - c1<sup>r</sup> especially.

second chancellor, briskly states, "en vertue consiste noblesse".<sup>9</sup>

## vi

The stated intention of The Faerie Queene is the education of a "gentleman or noble person in vertue and gentle discipline"; and this goal is to be achieved by means of the examples contained in the poem, particularly that of Prince Arthur and his virtue of magnificence, the "perfection of all the rest". This perfection "in the twelve private moral vertues" closely resembles the summa perfectio, the personal perfection required of the knight by the chivalric theorists. The extent to which Spenser identifies the virtuous man and the perfect knight is indicated by a brief example from the Letter to Raleigh: Prince Arthur, we are told, is not intended to represent just a good man, or even a perfect man. He is the "image of a brave knight". In other words, Prince Arthur is not here allegorical in the sense that one thing is

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9. Guillaume Fillastre, Le Premier [- Second] Volume de la Toison d'Or (1516), f. ii<sup>r</sup>. The notion was not, of course, confined to antiquarians and heralds: Spenser's headmaster Richard Mulcaster wrote, "For to become a gentleman is to bear the cognisaunce of vertue, whereunto honour is companion" (Positions, abridged and edited by R.L. De Molen (New York, 1971); quoted by M.C. Bradbrook, John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist (Weidenfeld, 1980), p. 25).



standing for another wholly different. Instead he, the supreme "brave knight", expresses (to use Spenser's term) the essence of "brave knighthood". The difficulties faced by a contemporary knight and his means of overcoming them may be allegorised in the poem; but the brave knight remains the same in both tenor and vehicle.

Chivalry in this sense is not mere romantic colouring for Spenser's poem: it is the paradigm of the virtuous and noble life he advocates. So much is indicated in Spenser's direct comments introducing and concluding Marinell's tournament. At the beginning he tells us that he will avoid unnecessary, though attractive detail; instead,

for so much as to my lot here lights,  
That with this present treatise doth agree,  
True vertue to advance, shall here recounted bee.  
(V.iii.3.7-9)

At the end of the canto Spenser draws the moral of the tournament; and this time he expresses the promotion of "true vertue" in chivalric terms:

So ought all faytours, that true knighthood  
And armes dishonour with base villanie,  
From all brave knights be banisht with defame:  
For oft their lewdnes blotteth good deserts with  
blame.  
(V.iii.38.6-9)

"True knighthood", which has been advanced in the course of this canto, is silently substituted for the "true vertue" that was to have been its subject.

Section Two: The Orders of Maidenhead and the Garter

i

The primary expression of the chivalric ideal is the institution of knighthood and the specific orders of knighthood embody that ideal in an even more exalted form. For his poem Spenser creates an entirely new order with Gloriana as its sovereign. But despite its originality and close connection with the Faery Queen herself, the Order of Maidenhead receives few mentions in criticism of the poem. Scholars have mainly taken the line of Kitchin, who observes, "Spenser probably only meant that all who entered the Queen's service became champions of her purity".<sup>10</sup> In the following pages I attempt to re-value the Order of Maidenhead and to demonstrate that this comment underrates the use Spenser makes of chivalric institutions and their emblems. Furthermore I shall suggest that the Order of Maidenhead is rendered more prominent than is normally recognised through the many allusions in The Faerie Queene to the principal chivalric institution of England, the Order of the Garter.

Only a few critics accord the Order of Maidenhead any real function in The Faerie Queene and those

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10. Var 2, p. 280.



who do comment on its role frequently display misunderstandings of its basic features. For instance, Angus Fletcher notes that "the Knights of Maidenhead are a recollection of the Round Table".<sup>11</sup> This is certainly the case. He further comments that this Order occupies a significant place in the overall structure of the poem: "the Faerie Queene will eventually marry Prince Arthur, at which time all nature in her kingdom will have been redeemed by the various quests of her Knights of Maidenhead" (pp. 97-98). But this latter statement reveals underlying confusion. Fletcher appears to assume that all the titular knights of the poem, the questing knights, are members of the "transcendental family structure" of the Order of Maidenhead (p. 178). This cannot be right; Britomart is not a member, nor is the Red Cross Knight. Perhaps more seriously, Fletcher assumes that the Order's effects are purely beneficial. He does not take into account the disruptive element among the Knights of Maidenhead, the Paridells and the Satyranes.

John E. Hankins's comments on the Order improve on Fletcher's in that they countenance the possibility of the Order's imperfection. Hankins considers the Order to be central to the Books of Chastity and Friendship. He suggests that it is prominent because

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11. Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 1971), p. 108.

the Knights of Maidenhead represent "the forces persauding [a woman] not to surrender [her virginity]".<sup>12</sup> He explains that these forces prompt opposition both to illegal lust and to the valid claim of the marriage bed; and that they are therefore not entirely positive. Thus it is that the Order is confronted not only by the philandering Paridell but also by the honourable lovers and husbands, Cambell and Triamond (pp. 145-46).

This interpretation of the Order has considerable merit. But once Hankins mentions specific knights we again become aware of confusion. He takes as members of the Order of Maidenhead only those who fight with Satyrane at the tournament for Florimell's girdle. But Satyrane's force is routed by Arthegall, who is earlier described as one of the leading lights of the Order (II.ix.6.9). Similarly Paridell fights for the opposition; but he is certainly included in "all the noble knights of Maydenhead" (III.viii.47.7) with whom Satyrane mourns the loss of Florimell. The interpretations of both Fletcher and Hankins founder on the treacherous rock of membership. The fact that Arthegall, Satyrane, Paridell, and Guyon are all Knights of Maidenhead whereas Britomart and the Red Cross Knight are not, demands that we seek a more complex meaning for the Order.

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12. John Erskine Hankins, Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory: A Study of "The Faerie Queene" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 145.

Angus Fletcher commented that the Order of Maidenhead was reminiscent of the Round Table. There is also the possibility that it is associated with that other pseudo-Arthurian institution, the Order of the Garter. It has been noted before that there are fleeting references to the Garter in The Faerie Queene. An examination of these and of others hitherto unseen reveals that references to the Garter centre on the Order of Maidenhead and the part of the poem in which it is most prominent, the tournament of Satyrane.

Hankins begins his discussion of the Order of Maidenhead with a comment on the meaning of its name:

The term [maidenhead] is used for maidenhood ... But Spenser is aware of "maidenhead" in its anatomical sense, referring to the hymen as the sign of a girl's virginity. (p. 145)

The associations he proposes, maidenhood and the hymen, are undeniably present and are particularly important in Books Three and Four. But the Order functions throughout the first five books and its name relates to them all.

There is a strong possibility that the use of the name "Maidenhead" for a chivalric order is intended to remind us immediately of the Order of the Garter. The Order of the Garter was founded by Edward III with a tournament held at Windsor Castle. The Order's headquarters were and still are in that castle. So strong

is the association of the Garter with Windsor that the writer of the Liber niger even contrives to imply that the castle was one of the principal residences of King Arthur, in imitation of whose Round Table the Garter was established (p. 21). So close is the geographical connection ~~with~~ between the Order and the place that Shakespeare is able to rely on his audiences' awareness of it to comic effect in The Merry Wives of Windsor.<sup>13</sup>

The nearest town to Windsor, a little way up the Thames, is Maidenhead. It is possible that, as well as containing the associations Hankins proposes for the name, Spenser uses "Maidenhead" because its geographical associations would alert his audience to the analogy between his Order and that existing at the court of Queen Elizabeth.<sup>14</sup>

### iii

Bearing this possible allusion in mind we should examine other aspects of the Order of Maidenhead with care. The relationship with the Garter is

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13. Merry Wives of Windsor IV.iii and v, for instance. See William Green, Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor" (Princeton: P.U.P., 1962), for a discussion of the play's many references to the Elizabethan Order of the Garter and the Order's earlier history.
  14. Camden in fact uses the same etymology as Hankins to explain the town's name, which he derives from "the superstitions [sic] worshipping of I wote not what British Maidens-head" (Britaine, p. 286).

confirmed by references to the establishment of this Order and to its patron-saint St George in the train of events leading to Satyrane's tournament; and it is at the tournament that the Order of Maidenhead is most prominent in the poem. These references begin with Satyrane's simple action of finding Florimell's girdle.

Satyrane discovers Florimell's lost girdle on the seashore and uses it to tie up and thus pacify the Hyena which had been pursuing her. As has been noted by previous critics, this action closely resembles the defeat of the dragon in the Golden Legend's "Life of St George". St George, having wounded the dragon,

after sayd to the mayde, delyver to me your  
gyrdell, and bynde it aboute the necke of the  
dragon, and be not aferde. Whan she had  
done soo, the dragon folowed her as it had be  
a meke beest and debonayre. 15

The use of a maiden's girdle and its effect on the beast recur in Satyrane's battle with the Hyena:

The golden ribband, which that virgin wore  
About her sclender wast, he tooke in hand,  
And with it bound the beast, that lowd did rore,  
For great despight of that unwonted band,  
Yet dared not his victour to withstand,  
But trembled like a lambe, fled from the pray,  
And all the way him followed on the strand  
(III.vii.36.1-7)

Despite critical awareness of this allusion to the Golden Legend, no explanation has been given of Spenser's

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15. The Golden Legend in The Life of St George, p. 114.  
I have normalised the punctuation.

reasons, if any, for linking Satyrane and the Hyena with St George and the Dragon. Indeed these reasons remain obscure until the arrival of Sir Paridell, whose speech broadens the context in which the battle should be seen. The latter informs Satyrane that all the knights of Gloriana's court have left in search of Florimell. In saying this and in describing their search as a "quest" (III.viii.50.8) Paridell redefines the combat with the Hyena in chivalric terms. Satyrane accepts and adopts this chivalric context, telling Paridell that,

dead, I surely doubt, thou maist aread  
Henceforth for ever Florimell to be,  
That all the noble knights of Maydenhead,  
Which her ador'd, may sore repent with me  
(III.viii.47.5-8)

The finding of Florimell has become the quest of "all the brave knights, that doen in armes excell" (III.viii.46.7).

In this chivalric context the allusion to St George may be comprehended. St George is both the patron-saint of England and specifically the patron of the Order of the Garter. His defeat of the dragon is the Order's most striking image, being represented on its principal badges, the Great and Lesser Georges. The many portraits of Garter Knights prominently displaying their badges and particularly the astonishing portrait of Elizabeth I holding up to the onlooker the Lesser George are testimony to the image's prestige. And more than prestige; for, as Roy Strong says, the



image of St George and the dragon was clearly regarded as "a sacred badge or hieroglyph", a fact all the more remarkable given the saint's near eclipse as a mere anonymous "armed knight" in Edward VI's proposed revision of the Garter insignia.<sup>16</sup>

With Paridell's introduction of a chivalric context, the allusion to St George becomes an allusion in particular to that saint as the patron of the Order of the Garter. Again, we must wait until the tournament to see the full significance of this comparison. But in the meantime we may indicate some of the local, yet telling points perceived through an awareness of the reference to St George. In Chapter Three I briefly interpreted the struggle with the Hyena as representing Satyrane's battle with his own concupiscence. In Tudor allegorisations of the Garter badge this is precisely the meaning drawn from the combat with the dragon. The Liber niger confirms this (albeit grudgingly surrendering St George to allegory):

I shall not contradict those who will make an Allegory of ... [the badgel], so they do not deny the Certainty of this History. Suppose every one George, who being cloathed with the Virtue of Baptism and Armor of Faith, keeps his earthly Body in Subjection by the due Exercise of Religion and Piety; and by the Armour of the Spirit overcomes, and by true spiritual Arts, crushes and confounds the Serpent's Poison, the Snares of the old Dragon, and his diabolical Arts and Stratagems. (p. 39)

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16. Roy Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth, p. 185. The picture of Queen Elizabeth holding the Lesser George is also reproduced here, plate 79.



It is interesting to note how easily and naturally the author falls into the language of martial symbolism when interpreting the badge, his phrasing generally echoing that of the Epistle to the Ephesians. His interpretation of the battle with the dragon confirms our account of Satyrane's struggle: both knights are fighting against their own propensity towards evil, and particularly against the lusts of the flesh.

The interpretations of badge and battle strengthen the connections between them. But of greater significance is the crucial difference highlighted through this comparison. For whereas St George subdues and ultimately kills the dragon and saves the Lady from death, Sir Satyrane fails in all respects: the Hyena escapes and Florimell is lost, presumed dead. This difference is significant in both the immediate moral allegory and in the effect of the allusions to the Order of the Garter. Satyrane is shown to be unable to achieve the perfection of St George (for whom he was also an inadequate substitute in Book One). But as a result of this episode and of his wearing of the lost girdle, he assumes the leadership of the Knights of Maidenhead at the tournament. He does so, despite the fact that his failure to control the Hyena is in direct contrast to the successful act depicted on the badges of the Garter, the Order of Maidenhead's counterpart in life. This contrast is our first indication that the Order of Maidenhead is not the ideal chivalric

institution we might expect in The Faerie Queene. The imperfection of Satyrane and of the Order is confirmed at the tournament which results from the finding of the girdle.

## iv

After the escape of the Hyena, Satyrane takes up the girdle and wears it, giving rise to hostility among his fellow knights. As the Squire of Dames explains,

Full many knights ...  
 Thereat did greatly grudge, that he alone  
 That lost faire Ladies ornament should weare,  
 And gan therefore close spight to him to beare:  
 Which he to shun, and stop vile envies sting,  
 Hath lately caus'd to be proclaim'd each where  
 A solemne feast, with publicke turneyng,  
 To which all knights with them their Ladies are  
 to bring.  
 (IV.ii.26.2-9)

Tournaments for trophies were common. But in the details of the Squire of Dames' account the Elizabethan reader would have recognised specific allusions to the popular version of the Order of the Garter's origins. As John Selden recounts, for instance, the Order arose out of the response to the wearing of a lady's lost garter (significantly as we shall see a circular garment):

Some and the most part affirme, that the King dancing with the Queen, or rather the Countesse of Salisbury (whom he much affected) a Garter fell from her. The King took it up, and ware it on his leg, and, whether upon the Queens jelousie, or his Lords merrie observing it, told them Hony soit que mal y pense. And

that he would make it the most honourable  
 Garter that ever was worn. (p. 362)

Edward III went on to establish the Order of the Garter at Windsor with a solemn feast and tournament.

The resemblances between Satyrane's problems with the girdle and Edward III's with the garter are clear. Both discover and wear a circular garment connected with chastity which has been lost by a lady. The wearing of the garment causes ill-feeling. Satyrane and Edward III both seek to obviate this by elevating the garment into a symbol or relic and both hold tournaments at which to celebrate their devotion. Edward does this by issuing a challenge on behalf of his new Order of the Garter; and Satyrane by doing the same, leading the Order of Maidenhead as challengers. Step by step, the origins of Satyrane's tournament follow the pattern set in the establishment of the greatest of chivalric institutions, the Order of the Garter.

v

The name of the Order; the battle with the Hyena; the finding and wearing of the girdle; and the occasion of Satyrane's tournament: these allusions are the grounds suggesting that the Order of Maidenhead is based on the Order of the Garter. We may further add that the sovereign of each is a virgin queen: Gloriana in The Faerie Queene and Elizabeth in life.

And subsequent to Satyrane's tournament, Scudamour in retrospect applies the motto of the Order of the Garter to the events that took place there:

Shame be his meede (quoth he) that meaneth  
shame.

(IV.vi.6.1)

In order to appreciate the significance of the connection between Maidenhead and the Garter we should briefly note the prominence of the Order of the Garter at Elizabeth's court. Membership of the Order was the highest accolade in the land and the Garter formed the apex of the system of honour. It was not only the dominant chivalric institution in England, but was pre-eminent among European orders of knighthood. Camden proudly informs us that twenty-two foreign kings and emperors had been members up to his day.<sup>17</sup> Membership was indeed highly coveted, both at home and abroad. To gain this honour the duke of Wurttemberg made a trip to England, pleaded and lied, bribed and threatened over a period of ten years; and was finally admitted only after the queen's death.<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth wisely kept all the orders of knighthood select, thus retaining their elitist allure: hence her fury at the so-called "Essex knights", the many creations of the dangerous Earl which devalued the honour system.<sup>19</sup> In particular

17. Camden, Britaine, pp. 287-88.

18. Strong, Cult of Elizabeth, p. 178.

19. See H.H. Leonard, Knights and Knighthood in Tudor England, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of London (1970), pp. 120-25.

Elizabeth limited the creation of Garter knights. In 1592 ten of the twenty-five stalls were vacant, not for want of candidates.<sup>20</sup> The exclusiveness of the Garter enabled it to remain highly prized, unlike the constantly diluted orders of chivalry of other European countries.

The Garter's preeminence was reflected in the attitude of the populace. Its rituals attracted vast crowds and the Order became a potent weapon in the queen's propaganda armoury. For instance its ceremonies and the election of new knights merit frequent mention in the news which Philip Gawdy, a scion of the gentry and minor figure at court, sends home to his brother and nephew.<sup>21</sup> The Garter was a favourite motif for artists and sitters, and for poets in praising the queen and her court.<sup>22</sup>

In Spenser's poem the Order of Maidenhead occupies a similar position at Gloriana's court, being the

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20. Leonard, pp. 176-77.

21. See The Letters of Philip Gawdy, ed. Isaac Herbert Jeayes (Roxburghe Club, 1906), pp. 51, 70, 78, and 81-82.

22. See, for instance, Peele's "The Honour of the Garter" and the portrait of Queen Elizabeth I holding the Lesser George owned by H.M. The Queen at Windsor Castle (Strong, Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, catalogue no. P. 28); and the portraits of the Earl of Nottingham and Lord Burghley in the National Portrait Gallery (see Strong, Tudor and Jacobean Portraits (H.M.S.O., 1969) 2 Vols., catalogue nos. 4434 and 362). As late as 1713 the Garter remains a sufficiently potent and popular image for it to be used satirically in the ballad, "The Blue Garter no more a Sign of Honesty than a Gilded Bush is of Good Wine".

highest rung on the ladder of honour. Guyon tells

Prince Arthur,

But were your will, her sold to entertaine,  
And numbred be mongst knights of Maydenhed,  
Great guerdon, well I wote, should you remaine,  
And in her favour high be reckoned,  
As Arthegall and Sophy now beene honored.  
(II.ix.6.5-9)

The status of the Order of Maidenhead at Gloriana's court and of the Garter at Elizabeth's should make us question what use Spenser makes of his Order and the purposes behind his allusion to its counterpart in Elizabethan England.

### Section Three: Satyrane's Tournament

#### i

The little critical attention received by Satyrane's tournament has been confused. T.K. Dunseath describes it as "chaos" (p. 32) with all the participants (except Britomart) tarred through the animal imagery with the same bestial brush (p. 36). On the other hand Alastair Fowler has seen it as "a poetic imitation of a balletic tournament, of a kind which actually took place in the sixteenth century".<sup>23</sup> Fowler discovers subtle numerological patterns which seem to

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23. Spenser and the Numbers of Time, p. 178.

establish differences, denied by Dunseath, between various figures and actions.<sup>24</sup>

Both critics have their points. Dunseath rightly indicates the ferocity and brutalised nature of the fighting, which contrasts wildly with the courtly tilting of the "balletic" tournaments of the day. Yet Fowler places the tournament in its correct context for the reader, relating it to the tradition of tournaments requiring interpretation. Spenser's original audience would have been well prepared to discover meanings in this event, not enjoying it merely for the excitement of the battle. Philip Gawdy, again, retails news of all the latest tournaments; and on one occasion expresses his disappointment, not at any lack of valour displayed; that is not even mentioned. Instead he complains that the intellectual standard has fallen:

Uppon Saterdag was the running of the tilt  
very well performed, thoughe not so full of  
devises and so riche as I have seene. (p. 25)

Martial skill was at best half the point. Similarly, describing the Iberian tournament in the Arcadia, Pyrochles confesses that "the delight of those pleasing sights have carried me too far into an unnecessary discourse"; but he has only briefly described one encounter, the rest of his description being taken up

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24. Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 179-80.



with the costumes and their interpretations.<sup>25</sup>

Arthegall appears at Satyrane's tournament in the well-known guise of a Savage Knight; Savage Knights are also found in Sidney's Iberian tournament and, Frances Yates suspects, in the Accession Day Tournament of 1584.<sup>26</sup> But Arthegall's outfit is the only armour described at Satyrane's tournament; and this indicates the different emphasis in Spenser's poem. Where others are primarily concerned with the delightful ceremonial and individual brilliance of dress and wit, Spenser subordinates these to the requirements of his overall allegory. He foregoes the set-piece of description in order to achieve clarity of meaning.

Spenser's knights are unlike those of the Arcadia or of real Elizabethan tournaments in that they do not understand the allegory in which they take part. They understand devices only as means of identification, not as requiring interpretation.<sup>27</sup> It is the reader who interprets as allegory that which seems to the combatants purely physical. In this sense the

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25. New Arcadia, p. 355.

26. Astraea, p. 91.

27. The exception that proves the rule, of course, is Sir Burbon's device of the red cross, which he identifies as "his deare Redeemers badge" (V.xi.53.5).

analogy with actual tournaments must be qualified.

Spenser's tournaments, unlike Sidney's, are not really very similar to those of the Elizabethan court; but Spenser requires us to understand his tournaments by using some of the same interpretative methods as his contemporaries used at the stately spectacles of the late sixteenth century.

## ii

To begin to understand Satyrane's tournament requires that we again stress its context. It is the occasion on which the Order of Maidenhead is most prominent in The Faerie Queene. And furthermore the tournament alludes to the similar event at which Edward III, it was believed, established the Order of the Garter.

Edward's supposed reasons for establishing a chivalric order are reported in the Liber niger. The anonymous writer states that Edward

saw what a vast Increase of Piety, Nobility, and Virtue would accrue from thence; how our Countrymen would the easier accord amongst themselves, and Foreigners likewise be joined in the same Bond of Peace and Friendship with us. And that he might the sooner and more firmly gain this End, he suited Vests and Ornaments with Names proper for the Order, that every one might know, that all these Things tended to Virtue, Friendship and Concord.

(pp. 24-25)

In passing it is noticeable again that, according to this writer at least, Edward III was well aware of

martial and chivalric symbolism in the selection of "Vests and Ornaments with Names proper for the Order". Whatever Edward III's real views, it is clear that by the sixteenth century the Order of the Garter was considered as a source of virtue in national life. And the virtue most closely connected with it is that of "Friendship and Concord", exactly the virtue celebrated and explored in Book Four of The Faerie Queene, in which Satyrane's tournament takes place.

The "Vests and Ornaments" of the Order include, of course, the garter itself. And the author of the Liber niger goes on to stress that this garment particularly is symbolic of friendship, unity, and concord:

For by that honourable and orbicular Garter ... the Knights were reminded, whatever they undertook to go thorow it with Piety, Sincerity, and Friendship, Faithfulness and Dexterity: That they should not undertake, or attempt any Thing contrary to the Oath and Institution of their Order ... That they should not stir a Foot contrary to their Fidelity, or what their Union and Band of Friendship required And that one Friend should not in the least derogate from another. (p. 26)

The garter symbolises the ties of friendship and concord between the knights of the Order. We should also notice that the salient quality of the garter, the quality allowing it to bear this interpretation, is its circularity: it is "orbicular" and can thus signify a "Band of Friendship".

The sense of the garter as binding together in a continuous circle reappears in later comments on the Order. Camden says that the Garter is,

the bond of a most inward society, in token of concord and unity, that there might bee among them a certaine consociation and communion of vertues. 28

Again we note that the Order of the Garter entails an integration of the virtues, the summa perfectio of Ramon Lull and Philip de Mezieres; and especially requires the virtue of concord. Finally we may cite Elias Ashmole, perhaps the greatest of writers on the Garter, who reiterates that the garter was "a Badge of Unity and Concord".<sup>29</sup>

Such a context is obviously appropriate for Satyrane's tournament. It takes place to reestablish good relations among the various knights following Satyrane's contentious wearing of the lost girdle. Spenser stresses its potential for creating concord out of discord when the invocation of the mere prospect of the tournament is sufficient to pacify various fractious knights. The Squire of Dames mentions it to reunite (on the surface) Paridell and Blandamour (IV.ii. 25-27). Cambina similarly calms Blandamour, Paridell, Triamond, and Cambell on their way to take part (IV.iv. 5; 12). Finally we may repeat that the tournament takes place in the fourth book - that of Friendship - and what is more in the fourth canto of that book. As Alastair Fowler has pointed out, such placing should

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28. Camden, Britaine, p. 278.

29. Ashmole, p. 183.

render it the very nexus of concord.<sup>30</sup> The tournament then, which is the showcase for the Order of Maidenhead, should provide that institution with the perfect opportunity to imitate its model in the establishment of order, concord, and virtue.

### iii

The tournament opens with a formal procession, and this again recalls the Elizabethan Order of the Garter. During Elizabeth's reign the procession of the Knights of the Garter was greatly developed as a spectacle and was extremely popular.<sup>31</sup> In that procession, as at Satyrane's event, "the knights in couples marcht" (IV.iv.14.9) as can be seen in contemporary illustrations.<sup>32</sup>

This initial procession introduces the expected sense of potential concord and order. Processions of participants in which the allegorical burden of the display was revealed were a major feature of Elizabethan tournaments, as was the case in the Accession Day

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30. Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 24-33; see also pp. 175-82.

31. See Strong, Cult of Elizabeth, pp. 168-73.

32. See the engraving by Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder of the Garter procession of 1576 (reproduced in Strong, Cult of Elizabeth, plates 80-83).

Tournament of 1590 when Sir Henry Lee resigned his role as Queen's Champion.<sup>33</sup> Satyrane's procession, although not containing the detailed meaning of the tournament, indicates the direction it is to take: Alastair Fowler has shown that the grouping of figures in the procession gives it a tetradic structure, further contributing to the symbolism of concord (p. 177).

But the unity thus signaled is disrupted by the presence of Braggadocchio, who

rather chose,  
For glorie vaine their fellowship to lose,  
That men on him the more might gaze alone.  
(IV.iv.14.4-6)

His singleness and independence upsets all numerological calculations here, as Fowler suggests it also does in the total number of contestants involved in the tilting (p. 179). And we notice that it is "fellowship" or friendship that is lost by his egotistical isolation, the theme of the book and of the chivalric order. There are other indications that the harmony implied in the procession is superficial: to group themselves for it, incomers "did divide / Them selves asunder" (IV.iv. 14.1-2). Spenser's division of the phrase by the line ending may deliberately make concrete the latent discord and disunion disguised by the apparent concord of the procession.

There is a further source of disquiet in the

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33. Yates, Astraea, pp. 102-104.



description of the opening of the tournament. The procession's ceremonial is excessive and suspect:

Then first of all forth came Sir Satyrane,  
 Bearing that precious relicke in an arke  
 Of gold, that bad eyes might it not prophane:  
 Which drawing softly forth out of the darke,  
 He open shewd, that all men it mote marke.  
 A gorgeous girdle, curiously embost  
 With pearle and precious stone, worth many a  
marke;  
 Yet did the workmanship farre passe the cost:  
 It was the same, which lately Florimel had lost.

The same aloft he hong in open vew,  
 To be the prize of beautie and of might;  
(IV.iv.15; 16.1-2)

The problem here is a matter both of decorum and of religious principle. There is, firstly, a disproportion between the object, Florimell's girdle, and the reverence with which it is treated. But more seriously, Satyrane's conduct, hiding the girdle from profanation by the eyes of the unworthy and then solemnly revealing it, is reminiscent of Roman Catholic ritual: the girdle is a "precious relicke" hidden mysteriously within an "arke of gold". There is a distinct whiff of papistry in this behaviour.

If we are right in sensing excess and worse here, a further irony is to be found in the relationship between Sir Satyrane and St George. According to the Golden Legend, the reason for the latter's martyrdom was his refusal to indulge in idolatry, to worship "precious relickes".<sup>34</sup> The silent comparison with St George again undermines Satyrane's standing as a

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34. Golden Legend in The Life of St George, pp. 114-16.



virtuous knight.

Interestingly this again recalls the sixteenth-century Order of the Garter. The Order was attacked for its links with the old religion of England, Roman Catholicism. Edward VI's reign saw a determined attempt to set the Order to Protestant rights: St George killing the Dragon, an idolatrous saints-image, was to become merely a representation of a "knight on horseback".<sup>35</sup> Furthermore in 1553 the king authorised the writing of a new set of regulations; these, as Roy Strong summarises, explained

how the Order of the Garter, which had been designed to bind valiant and martial men of rank in unity and concord, had been corrupted by "that old Serpent Satan" who had filled the statutes with "many obscure, superstitious, and repugnant opinions." 36

Edward's new regulations came to nothing. But Puritan attacks on the Garter continued in Elizabeth's reign. Frederick II of Denmark refused for a time to accept the insignia of the Order because he suspected it of papistical leanings.<sup>37</sup> Throughout her life Elizabeth herself had to ward off attempts to deprive her of the candelsticks, vestments, and saints-images of her private chapels.<sup>38</sup> Satyrane's procession, so like an

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35. See Strong, Cult of Elizabeth, p. 182.

36. Strong, Cult of Elizabeth, p. 166.

37. Strong, Cult of Elizabeth, p. 178.

38. For a recent account of Elizabeth's struggles with the Anglican Church over her ecclesiastical paraphernalia, see Patrick Collinson, Archbishop /Contd.

Elizabethan Garter procession, is similarly suspect.

iv

Once the fighting begins, all attempts to preserve order and concord are abandoned and our doubts concerning the moral quality of some of the combatants are confirmed. In seeing the tournament as giving expression to the faults of many taking part I agree with T.K. Dunseath; but we must be careful to understand the precise way in which Spenser leads us to condemn them; and here we must refine Dunseath's conclusions.<sup>39</sup>

Although Satyrane emerges victorious from the first day's battle, his triumph is rendered suspect by the terms in which it is described. Spenser tells us that, as victor ludorum,

Satyrane that day was judg'd to beare the bell.  
(IV.iv.25.9)

"The bell" may refer to the prize given at races or contests in classical times. But the form of this reference is that of the phrase "to bear the bell" which

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Footnote 38 continued from page 243.

Grindal (1519-1583): The Struggle for a Reformed Church (Cape, 1979), pp. 167-76; especially p.167.

39. See Dunseath, pp. 31-39.

derives from "the bell worn by the leading cow or sheep ... of a drove or flock".<sup>40</sup> As I remarked at the beginning of this section, T.K. Dunseath sees in the extensive use of animal imagery at the tournament evidence of the dehumanised nature of the contestants. This phrase would appear to corroborate his theory, making Satyrane outstanding on the first day only as the leading animal, the master of the herd. Furthermore the same phrase is later used to describe the winner of the cestus competition in the following canto (IV.v.13.6). To be thus associated with the false Florimell reflects no credit upon Satyrane.

However, on reflection Dunseath's argument seems anachronistic. Spenser uses animal imagery elsewhere in The Faerie Queene without derogatory overtones. And its presence in battle scenes is sanctioned by epic tradition.<sup>41</sup> But nonetheless the animal imagery is worthy of attention, because it reveals, not the common bestiality of the combatants, but differences between groups of characters during the tournament.

On the second day Satyrane is defeated by

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40. OED s6<sup>1</sup> III 7. See also Morris Palmer Tilley, A Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Ann Arbor: Michigan U.P., 1950), B.275; and Bartlett Jere Whiting and Helen Wescott Whiting, Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1968), B.230.

41. See for instance the Aeneid, 12.715-21.

Cambell, an incident seen by Dunseath as merely confirming their similarity:

Cambell, in envying Satyrane's glory as the ruler of beasts, becomes animal-like in turn ... Together Cambell and Triamond win the second day's fighting, however. Their style of battle is appropriate and not out of keeping with the standards established by Satyrane.  
(p. 34)

One initially hesitates to accept this interpretation because it disregards the obvious virtue displayed by these two knights, the friendship celebrated in the book of which they are patrons. These reservations are justified by a study of the animal imagery, which enables us to distinguish between Satyrane and Cambell and Triamond. Satyrane is compared to a bull and to the leading animal of the herd. Cambell is compared to a lion, as Arthegall is later; and Cambell and Triamond are compared to a pair of wolves. The obvious difference is that Satyrane is the leading animal of the herd, but a herd animal nonetheless; whereas Cambell, Triamond, and Arthegall are all compared to those animals which prey on the herd.

One simile may serve to elucidate Spenser's point. The fighting of Cambell and Triamond is such,

As when two greedy Wolves doe breake by force  
Into an heard, farre from the husband farme,  
They spoile and ravine without all remorse,  
So did these two through all the field their foes  
enforce.  
(IV.iv.35.6-9)

Were Spenser's concern the degradation of humanity into beast-like ferocity, Cambell and Triamond would be damned

(as Satan is in Paradise Lost IV.183-87). But the context suggests that we are to expect a reversal of normal attitudes. Instead of forcing entry into a flock, Cambell has been taken prisoner, and he and Triamond are fighting their way out. Their situation is the opposite of the wolves. Spenser's point lies in the relationship of the wolf to the "heard"; Cambell and Triamond are wolflike because they oppose and fight against the Order of Maidenhead. And it is through the animal imagery that they are thus differentiated from it.

## v

It will be noticed immediately that the three combatants thus distinguished from the "heard" are the three titular knights who take part in the tournament before the arrival of Britomart. Unlike previous criticism we can now see that these two groups, the Knights of Maidenhead and the titular knights, are not one and the same. Although there is some overlap in membership, at Satyrane's tournament they are definitely in opposition to each other.

This opposition is not arbitrary. The titular knights fight against the Order of Maidenhead, as it is manifested at this tournament, because it is corrupt. Just as Sir Satyrane's deficiencies are seen in the implied comparison with St George, so the Order of



Maidenhead is revealed as imperfect through the analogy with the Garter. There are among the Knights of Maidenhead individuals who do not fulfil those expectations of virtuous and honourable living, and particularly of friendship and concord, aroused through the allusions to the Garter and the placement of the tournament in The Faerie Queene. And these individuals include Sir Satyrane, who on this occasion is the leader of the Order.

The Order of the Garter's principal aim was the promotion of unity and concord. The coincidence of these virtues with the subject of Spenser's fourth book makes the failure of the tournament to promote, or even preserve, friendship among the knights of the "heard" all the more significant. The discord reigning among the Knights of Maidenhead, which breaks out openly and violently at the cestus competition, is indicative of their more general failure in virtue. Spenser underlines their disunity by having them opposed in chief by the dual patrons of the virtue of friendship, Cambell and Triamond.

After their victory on the second day of the tournament, these two knights enact a perfect demonstration of their virtue; and in so doing they raise it from the purely human quality of friendship to the universal quality of divine concord. In deference to each other, they both refuse to accept the prize as the

second day's best warrior:

Then all with one consent did yeeld the prize  
 To Triamond and Cambell as the best.  
 But Triamond to Cambell it relest.  
 And Cambell it to Triamond transferd;  
 Each labouring t'advance the others gest,  
 And make his praise before his owne preferd:  
 (IV.iv.36.3-8)

We notice that their victory enables the multitude to speak with one voice. And although there are only two characters involved, Spenser contrives through the repetition of the names - "Triamond and Cambell ... Triamond to Cambell ... Cambell ... to Triamond" - to convey the pattern of the Three Graces:

two of them still froward seem'd to bee,  
 But one still towards shew'd her selfe afore;  
 (VI.x.24.7-8)

The pattern of reciprocity thus established is never-ending, as in the dance of the Three Graces, because "the doome was to another day differd" (IV.iv.36.9), a day which never comes in the poem as we have it. The two patrons of Friendship embody one of the blessings Spenser attributes to the Graces:

These three on men all gracious gifts bestow ...  
 As comely carriage, entertainment kynde,  
 Sweete semblaunt, friendly offices that bynde,  
 And all the complements of curtesie:  
 (VI.x.23.1-6; my italics)

The friendly offices of Cambell and Triamond in the exchange of the prize show them to possess the heavenly concord of the Graces.

The difference between the knights-patron of Friendship and the Knights of Maidenhead is specifically pointed out when Spenser parodies this pattern in the



lustful quarrel that erupts over the possession of the false Florimell:

Thereat exceeding wroth was Satyran;  
 And wroth with Satyran was Blandamour;  
 And wroth with Blandamour was Erivan;  
 And at them both Sir Paridell did loure.  
 (IV.v.24.1-4)

Here again the feelings are reciprocated. Aptly the parody ends with Sir Paridell, the descendent of Paris, causer of the Trojan War, who had also had to decide the fate of the apple of discord. Although some critics see Paridell as no more than a lovable rogue, Spenser takes him much more seriously when he judges his story to be one of "knighthood fowle defaced by a faithlesse knight" (III.ix.1.9). The pattern of names in the stanza above leads to Paridell, a member of the Order of Maidenhead and yet the travesty of a good knight. Instead of friendship, concord, and the desire to give, the Knights of Maidenhead are concerned only with taking the worthless false Florimell. The tournament, instead of concluding as a celebration of harmony and order, ends in chaos.

vi

The events of the third day of the tournament may be thought to invalidate these conclusions. Britomart, another of the titular knights, rescues the Knights of Maidenhead from defeat at the hands of

Arthegall. But assessment of her role must include our knowledge that she is an outsider, not of Gloriana's court and particularly not a member of the Order of Maidenhead. She is, furthermore, a woman and an unknown. In the course of the fighting she is never likened to an animal, either of the "heard" or of the wild. In fact her position is metaphorically superior to all those present, acting to prevent an excessive outcome. Spenser likens her to

A watry cloud [that] doth overcast the skie,  
And poureth forth a sudden shoure of raine,  
That all the wretched world recomforteth againe.  
(IV.iv.47.7-9)

Continuing the metaphor, Spenser states that she relieves not just the Knights of Maidenhead but "all brute beasts ... [which] doe hunt for shade" (IV.iv.47.3-4).

Britomart's victory suspends the defeat of the Knights of Maidenhead at the hands of the other titular knights. Arthegall's armour, the only suit-of-arms described at the tournament, may tell us why her intervention is required:

all his armour was like salvage weed,  
With woody mosse bedight, and all his steed  
With oaken leaves attrapt, that seemed fit  
For salvage wight, and thereto well agreed  
His word, which on his ragged shield was writ,  
Salvagesse sans finesse, shewing secret wit.  
(IV.iv.39.4-9)

His disguise as a Salvage Knight may confirm the division among the knights made by the animal imagery: the Salvage Knight is an outsider, like the wolf and

the lion. The motto is also apt in part, but we must ask why he is "sans finesse". "Finesse" is usually interpreted as refinement; but it can also mean fineness or the ability to make subtle distinctions.<sup>42</sup> In the tournament, Arthegall's success threatens to be merely destructive, destroying absolutely the Order of Maidenhead and not just its corruption. His victory will be too absolute and he will annihilate the virtues of the chivalric institution along with its faults. Britomart introduces the necessary "finesse" and stabilises the tournament. The result is that the Order of Maidenhead is preserved from destruction; but it is not saved by its own power, for that would confirm it in its own corruption. Instead the third day's battle is won by Britomart, who stands outside both groups, being neither of the "heard" nor of the wild.

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42. OED Finesse sb 2.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE EMBLEMS OF KNIGHTHOOD AND MARINELL'S TOURNAMENT

Satyrane's tournament is deeply unsatisfactory. It ends in shambles and the associated cestus competition only reveals more clearly the rifts and fissures dividing the various Knights of Maidenhead. The conclusion effected by Britomart's intervention is purely temporary and resolves nothing.

We have to wait until the tournament celebrating the spousals of Florimell and Marinell to see a fitting conclusion to the themes of the earlier event. The second tournament obviously recalls the first in many of its details, in its three day structure and in the presence of such characters as Braggadocchio and the false Florimell. But by contrast this event has a conclusive air: it is the terminus for the story of Braggadocchio; the false Florimell literally melts into thin air; Florimell and her husband are never mentioned again thereafter; and Spenser even reactivates an all-but-forgotten unfinished element in the history of Sir Guyon, before letting that knight once more retreat into the background.

In order to understand the resolution effected at Marinell's tournament we must study the use made there of chivalric emblems. As we shall see, Spenser

shows himself acutely aware of the perversion by the unworthy of the emblems of knighthood. In addition I shall suggest that for Spenser this perversion is more than superficial; rather it constitutes a serious attack on the institution of knighthood and thus by implication on the world of The Faerie Queene.

### Section One: The Return of the Emblems of Knighthood

#### i

At Satyrane's tournament, the spear emerges gradually and unemphatically as the dominant weapon. When he opens the tournament Satyrane takes

in hand  
An huge great speare, such as he wont to wield.  
(IV.iv.17.1-2)

And Triamond's anger at Braggadocchio's cowardice is expressed through an action involving the spear:

But Triamond halfe wroth to see him staid,  
Sternly stept forth, and raught away his speare  
(IV.iv.20.5-6)

Finally the tournament is concluded by the arrival of the "Knight of the Hebene Speare":

for no powre of man  
Could bide the force of that enchaunted speare,  
The which this famous Britomart did beare;  
(IV.iv.46.3-5)

Spenser provides no commentary to enable us to say definitely that this prominence of the spear is

significant; or if it is, exactly what is signified.

However we may speculate that the essence of the poet's meaning is contained in Triamond's action: he, a titular knight, deprives Braggadocchio, the falsest of the pretenders to knighthood, of one of the principal attributes of a warrior.

In a less literal way, perhaps, we may see Britomart's successful use of her characteristic weapon as rescuing that class of armament from the hands of unworthy knights. As we saw in Chapter Three, the "huge great speare" in Satyrane's hands is something of a phallic symbol and is associated with lust.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the tournament its use by Britomart, the knight-patron of the virtue of Chastity, restores it to its position among the weapons and attributes of virtue.

This interpretation is highly speculative: the transference of the spear as an attribute is far from certain at the first tournament. But at the event celebrating the spousals the display and return of various weapons and emblems is so integral to the action that it leaves no doubt. The confiscation and repossession of various articles at Marinell's tournament goes some way to confirming the description of the spear's adventures at Satyrane's. Furthermore, considered together the individual weapons and emblems

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1. See Chapter Three, section 1.



involved have this in common, that they are all connected with the institution of knighthood.

ii

The most obvious action involving the emblems of knighthood is that with which Marinell's tournament ends, the public disgrace of Braggadocchio. This takes the form of an "uncasing"; the boaster is formally degraded from the office and station of a knight, at the hand of Talus:

First he his beard did shave, and fowly shent:  
Then from him reft his shield, and it renverst,  
And blotted out his armes with falshood blent,  
And himself baffuld, and his armes unherst,  
And broke his sword in twaine, and all his armour  
sperst.  
(V.iii.37.5-9)

Upton comments that "cowards in the lists were proclaimed false and perjured, their armour taken from them, beginning from the heals upwards, and then ignominiously flung piece by piece over the barriours: they were likewise dragged out of the lists and punished as the judges decreed".<sup>2</sup> Upton is certainly right in seeing the chivalric nature of this action; but to confine this punishment to those convicted of cowardice in tournaments is somewhat misleading. At least in

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2. The Faerie Queene, ed. John Upton. Vol. 2, p.



theory knights were liable to degradation for proving unworthy or unfaithful to their vows in daily life. Spenser presents just such a degradation: not only is Braggadocchio banished from the tournament, but he is excluded from the company of knights.

Such ceremonies were still in occasional use in the sixteenth century. In 1569 the Earl of Northumberland was stripped of his membership of the Order of the Garter having been convicted of high treason:

for the which detestable offence and high treason the said Thomas hath deserved to be disgraded of the said most noble Ordre, and expelled out of the said companye; and not worthy that his armes, ensigns, and hachements, should remayne amongst virtuous and approved Knights of the said most noble Ordre. Wherefore our most righteous Quene, supreme and Soveraigne of this our most noble Ordre, with the Companions now present of the same, wyll and command that these armes, ensigns, and hatchments, of the said Thomas, be taken away and throwne downe, and he be cleane put from this Ordre, & from henceforth to be none of the number thereof. 3

A manuscript account of the degradation describes how the Earl's arms were thrown down "violently from the tabernacle whereon they hong, into the body of the quyre" and came to rest ignominiously in "the dyke without the castell gate".<sup>4</sup>

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3. John Nichols, The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, 3 vols. (2nd edition, 1823). Vol. 1, p. 263.

4. BL Harley MS 304, f84<sup>v</sup>. For further details of degradings, see Selden, pp. 337-39.

The account of the unfortunate Earl's expulsion conveys the value which chivalry places on its symbols. Not only is the man dishonourable: his "armes, ensigns, and hachements" seem almost themselves unworthy to "remayne amongst virtuous and approved Knights" of the Order. The arms possess a semi-independent reality, a feature of chivalric symbols I shall return to.

iii

In both the real and the fictional degradations the knight's armour is recognised as fulfilling a symbolic function: it is the outward sign of honour and knighthood. In Braggadocchio's case his shield bears the brunt of Talus's attentions, being reversed and having the device blotted out.

Something of the significance in The Faerie Queene of such a fate for the shield can be gauged by comparison with the description of Verdant's armour in the Bower of Bliss:

his brave shield, full of old moniments,  
Was fowly ra'st, that none the signes might  
see;  
Ne for them, ne for honour cared hee,  
Ne ought, that did to his advauncement tend  
(II.xii.80.3-6)

Verdant's shield has lost the evidence of his nobility, office, and station. That which marked him out as a knight and as a gentleman has been erased. The fate of the shield represents the fall from nobility and

honour in the man himself. The destruction of the armour emblematises the first stage of decline into Grill-like bestiality, in which humanity, not just nobility, is ultimately lost. The fate of Verdant's arms signifies more than idleness. In like manner Braggadocchio's degradation represents more than cowardice: rather it implies total unfitness for the responsibilities and honours of knighthood.

## iv

It is important to recognise the reasons for Braggadocchio's fate. His degradation does not follow his cowardice in the lists (he does not take part in the fighting at the second tournament); nor on his fraudulent claims to victory; nor on his verbal assault on Florimell. It results from the discovery of his theft of Guyon's horse and spear.

Guyon's reappearance and the recovery of his property have been seen as evidence of the close relationship between the virtues of Books Two and Five. James Nohrnberg states that,

Justice is now done to temperance: the golden girdle is restored to the lady who can wear it, and the horse with the golden bridle is returned to the knight who can manage it. The analogy here is the analogy of government. Braggadocchio's incontinence has consisted in his inability to resist appropriating the attributes of more noble natures ... the coward is stripped of his knighthood. 5

Although this explanation is ingenious, it seems forced and is only partially satisfying. Braggadocchio, as I have said, is not convicted of cowardice; and it is somewhat overwrought to transform his opportunistic theft into kleptomania in order to furnish a suitable species of intemperance. Besides, Braggadocchio has been able to ride this passionate horse, if a little uncertainly at times. The sense of strain in Nohrnberg's account perhaps derives from his desire to equate Guyon's steed consistently with the horse of the passions; but this is not necessarily its prime significance at this point.

Individual attributes, like individual characters, do not necessarily retain a constant signification throughout The Faerie Queene. According to the context any of the latent meanings of an attribute are brought into play. We recognise this readily enough in the case of more frequently used symbols, such as arrows: Cupid's arrows are different from Belpheobe's or Maleger's. But we are less able to accept the need to be guided by context when on unfamiliar ground.

The theft of Guyon's horse is a good example of the dangers of assuming a single meaning for a symbol. It has been convincingly argued that the knight loses the horse of the passions, control of which is necessary for the virtue of Temperance.<sup>6</sup> But although this is

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6. See the notes in A.C. Hamilton's edition of The Faerie Queene, p. 184 and p. 548, for a summary.

the horse lost by Guyon, it is by no means clear that the same horse is acquired by Braggadocchio. In terms of the narrative these steeds are one and the same. But Spenser's description of the theft suggests that the boaster gains a different beast altogether:

The whiles a losell wandring by the way,  
 One that to bountie never cast his mind,  
 Ne thought of honour ever did assay  
 His baser brest, but in his kestrell kind  
 A pleasing vaine of glory vaine did find,  
 To which his flowing tounge, and troublous  
spright  
 Gave him great ayd, and made him more inclind  
 He that brave steed there finding ready dight,  
 Purloynd both steed and speare, and ran away full  
light. 7  
(II.iii.4)

No connection, explicit or implicit, is made between the horse and the passions. What is more, we now realise that the spear is stolen too, a fact forgotten by Nohrnberg and his precursors. Unlike the horse, the spear has no traditional connection with temperance.

In fact, reading this stanza without preconceptions we become aware that the theft of both horse and spear is associated above all with courtliness and honour (or their lack), the context suggested by such terms as "glorie", "honour", and "bountie". Braggadocchio's right to the horse and spear is not disdained

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7. This quotation follows the Oxford English Poets edition (1909) by J.C. Smith, whose retention of the second "vaine" in line 5 follows the edition of 1596.

because he is intemperate, but because he is ignoble.

## v

Although he is characterised temporarily by lust in his encounter with Belphebe, intemperance does not dominate the presentation of Braggadocchio. His characterisation centres primarily on chivalric unworthiness; and in the course of the poem he accumulates a number of attributes belonging to a group of symbols connected with knighthood. As well as his armour, "sperst" ceremonially by Talus, Braggadocchio possesses or steals, and later loses, three things in The Faerie Queene: the horse; the spear; and the shield Arthegall uses at Marinell's tournament. All have connections with the courtly world of honour and nobility and are specifically symbolic of knighthood.

Little need be said of the shield's chivalric meaning beyond recalling the general conclusions of the first chapter. As Favyn remarks, "the Scutcheon or Shield ... is the essential note of a Nobleman, as also of an Esquire and Knight"; and he later notes that "the Shield was the principall part of Armes for a Knight".<sup>8</sup> In The Faerie Queene we have already remarked that the shield is used to represent the nobility

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8. Favyn, pp. 12 and 13.

of the whole man: for instance when the degeneration of Verdant is conveyed through the obliteration of the device on his shield. The fundamental significance of the shield to a knight is emphasised when Arthegall reprimands Sir Burbon:

Hard is the case, the which ye doe complaine;  
 Yet not so hard (for nought so hard may light,  
 That it to such a streight mote you constraine)  
 As to abandon, that which doth containe  
 Your honours stile, that is your warlike shield.  
 (V. xi.55.2-6)

At Marinell's tournament Braggadocchio loses the shield containing his "honours stile" because he has no right to the honour it symbolises. As in the case of Sir Burbon, it is Arthegall who states this explicitly:

That shield, which thou doest beare, was it indeed,  
 Which this dayes honour sav'd to Marinell;  
 But not that arme, nor thou the man I reed,  
 Which didst that service unto Florimell.  
 (V.iii.21.1-4)

The shield, as a symbol of the honour gained by the victor of the tournament, belongs to Arthegall, as surely as do the wounds received in the fighting. And several critics have pointed out that the device on this shield, "the Sunne brode blazed in a golden field" (V.iii.14.9), is more appropriate to Arthegall than to the charlatan knight.<sup>9</sup> On both these counts, therefore, Braggadocchio's possession of the shield is fraudulent.

The interpretation of the shield as a symbol of honour generally and as a symbol of knighthood in

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9. See for instance Aptekar, pp. 77-78.



particular is reinforced when we consider the spear stolen by Braggadocchio. To return to Favyn, "the principall Armes of the French Chevaliers, was the Lance and Shield" (p. 17). And not only the French, as Ashmole reminds us. He finds the donation of a spear and shield to be the principal sign of knighthood in all the Germanic races:

among whom [the Germans], as Tacitus affirms, the Shield and Launce were accounted the Badges of Military Honor, or Knighthood.  
(p. 27)

In The Faerie Queene this tradition is most obviously pertinent to Britomart's arming, which symbolises her assumption of the role of a questing knight. Spenser's description distinguishes the shield and spear by repetition:

Both speare she tooke, and shield, which hong  
by it:  
Both speare and shield of great powre, for her  
purpose fit.  
(III.iii.60.8-9)

As in much epic poetry, the formulaic conjunction of spear and shield becomes symbolic of the warrior or knight in The Faerie Queene. Although Braggadocchio gains his spear and shield on different occasions (in fact we are never told the origin of the shield) these two attributes are linked through their common fate. Talus "reft away his shield" on the orders of Arthegall; and the spear is "raught away" from Braggadocchio by Triamond, another of the titular knights, when the boaster hesitates to join in the previous tournament.

In both cases the attributes act as symbols of the knighthood to which Braggadocchio pretends, symbols repossessed by representatives of true chivalry.

As with shield and spear, Braggadocchio's stolen horse is seized at a tournament. While the crowd stands amazed at the disappearance of the false Florimell,

Sir Guyon as by fortune then befell,  
 Forth from the thickest preasse of people came,  
 His owne good steed, which he had stolne, to  
 clame;

(V.iii.29.3-5)

In this context, the return of Sir Guyon to claim his horse draws our attention to another chivalric symbol. Many writers comment on the central position of the horse in chivalric symbolism, alluding to the words for "knight" in other European languages: "Ritter" or "chevalier", for example. The chivalry of the Christian era was frequently associated with the Roman equestrian order; which, as its name suggests, was intimately connected with the horse:

The Equestrian Order among the ancient Romans was conferr'd by particular Ceremonies, to wit, the donation of a Horse, or giving of a Ring.  
 (p. 21)

But, as Ashmole goes on to say,

as the donation of a Horse was the ancient badge of Knighthood, so were those to whome it was given, saith Justus Lipsius, most anciently, properly, and alone in times past called Equites.  
 (p. 21)

Selden also notes that for a warrior to be connected with a horse was a great honour in the ancient world,

as it was in later Europe:

As all these in this Western part expresse a speciall honor implying abilitie of martiall service with horse: so the old Greeks attributed not to a great man a better name then what truly was the same with every of those. That is, ἰπποτοῦς; whence Hecuba calls Polymestor King of Thrace, Θρᾷκι ἰπποτοῦς, and in Homer ἰπποτα Nestor. So the chief men and of best worth in Chalcis were known by the Title of Hippobatae i. Equites. (p. 333)

Like the spear and shield, the horse is one of the primary symbols of knighthood.

In the course of The Faerie Queene Braggadocchio acquires these three symbols. At the two tournaments, and more notably at Marinell's, he is deprived of them. In each case he loses these attributes of a knight as a result of revealing his baseness by unchivalric behaviour. And all are repossessed by titular knights. The connection between his behaviour, these symbols and the institution of knighthood is finally made when his loss of the shield and armour is presented as a formal degradation from the office of knight.

vi

The various attributes unworthily possessed by Braggadocchio may have diverse meanings in other contexts. But their congregation around the boaster and loss during the tournaments suggest that we should seek the common ground between them: they are all symbolic

of the institution of knighthood; and at Marinell's tournament we see these in the process of returning to their worthier owners. Guyon reclaims his horse, Arthegall the shield, and Talus finally deprives Braggadocchio of the last physical signs of knighthood.

The primacy of the chivalric meaning of these symbols is recognised in Arthegall's dismissal of Braggadocchio. He condemns the imposter,

Hence [to] fare on foot, till he an horse have  
gayned.  
(V.iii.35.6)

This is not, except very incidentally, a reference to temperance. Instead Arthegall is directly drawing on chivalric symbolism. The false chevalier has been expelled from the order of knighthood. To obtain re-entry, he must earn the right to a horse, the principal symbol of the knight.

At the end of the tournament Spenser expresses the moral in propria persona:

So ought all faytours, that true knighthood  
And armes dishonour with base villanie,  
From all brave knights be banisht with defame:  
For oft their lewdnes blotteth good deserts with  
blame.  
(V.iii.38.6-9)

As in the proclamation of the Earl of Northumberland's degradation, we should note the independence of the "armes" liable to dishonour in these lines. Spenser in fact reverses our expectations of the potential fate of the "armes" and the "good deserts". The physical, material objects, the "armes", have their abstract

honour injured. But the "good deserts" are "blotted", as though they were physically corruptible (like Braggadocchio's "blotted ... armes" (V.iii.37.7)). The implications of such a reversal may be that the "armes" do have an abstract existence and that the pollution of the symbols of knighthood involves the pollution of the ideal itself through them. The return of these chivalric symbols at the spousals tournament represents the reversal of the corruption resulting from Braggadocchio's usurpation of them, the regeneration of knighthood within the poem.

## Section Two: The "Cingulum militare" and Florimell's Girdle

### i

Perhaps the most prominent of the emblems of knighthood not yet discussed is the military girdle, the cingulum militare. Although previous critics have never hinted at its presence, I shall attempt to demonstrate that Spenser uses the cingulum as a symbol throughout The Faerie Queene: from Prince Arthur in Book One to Astraea in the "Mutabilitie Cantos". This symbolism also has a bearing on the fate and interpretation of Florimell's girdle.

I retain the Latin term because of the variety

of ways in which "cingulum" is translated, even within one author's work. The chivalric writers frequently interchange "belt" and "girdle" as translations; and equally commonly it is rendered as "baldric". Both Selden and Segar appear to use all three as synonyms and with reason:<sup>10</sup> during the coronation of Elizabeth I the ceremony of "girding" was performed with a baldric;<sup>11</sup> that is to say, in the words of the OED, "with a belt or girdle, usually of leather and richly ornamented, worn pendant from one shoulder across the breast and under the opposite arm".<sup>12</sup> The cingulum militare and the baldric are explicitly related by Favyn, who discusses their common origins; and Ashmole, using a different etymology, states that the cingulum militare was also called baltheus or balteus, hence baldric.<sup>13</sup>

However translated, the cingulum militare is often regarded as the principal emblem of knighthood, as William Segar writes:

the girdle was the first Ensign bestowed upon souldiers, and without it no man might accompt himselfe among the number of militarie men, nor claim the priviledges due unto souldiers.  
(p. 6)

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10. Selden, p. 369; and William Segar, Honor, Military, and Civill, contained in foure Bookes (1602), p. 99.

11. Nichols, Vol. 1, p. 62: "and ther was a sworde with a girdele putt over her and upon one of her shoulters and under the other: And soe the sword hangeing by her side".

12. OED Baldric 1.

13. Favyn, p. 58; and Ashmole, p. 28.



John Selden adds the essential buttress to such a claim by stressing the antiquity of the cingulum:

by consent of Romans, Grecians, and other Nations the Belt ... was both the main part of Martiall acoultrement, and under it the whole was comprehended, so mongst our Northerns ... it specially succeeded into the room of that solemn taking Armes for a Knights outward ensign of Nobility. (p. 311)

According to Selden, not only is the cingulum the most important of the emblems of knighthood, but it also stands for all the others: it comprehends the significance of the lesser garments and weapons. Many other writers on chivalry give examples of the early Roman emperor's ceremony of making knights by the donation of a girdle. Favyn shows the reverse of this coin, confirming the significance of the cingulum, in his description of early imperial degradations, during which members of the equestrian order were expelled by the symbolic loss, not only of their eponymous horses, but also of their belts.<sup>14</sup> This brief survey of references to the cingulum militare may be concluded by noting that the association of a girdle with war is both ancient and literary. Selden notes that, in the Iliad, Agammemnon's appearance is characterised by his resemblance to a whole pantheon of gods, from each of whom he takes a distinguishing attribute: he is, as Selden says, "'like Mars in his Girdle, belt,' or indeed, as it interprets, 'armor'" (p. 311).

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14. Favyn, p. 51.



The common feature of all types of cingulum, whether worn as a belt or as a girdle, is that they are binding garments; and in this we see their relationship with the Garter. The author of the Liber niger tells us that the "orbicular Garter" symbolised the "Union and Band of Friendship" (p. 26); the word "orbicular" links the garter with other circular, binding garments of the cingulum group.

Indeed the form of the insignia of the Garter is less stable than its name and present day usage suggest. In the past it could take the more standard forms of the cingulum. The Liber niger records that Edward III ordered the garter to be "worn over one of their Shoulders, on the Leg and sometimes on the Thumb" (p. 24). Furthermore the insignia of the Order includes a blue sash worn as a baldric, from which the Lesser George is now suspended; and this is the normal insignia of a Knight of the Garter. Related to this possible use of baldrics is the suggestion that, in the unclear development of this Order, influence upon its insignia was exerted by the Spanish *Ordre de la Banda*, the chief garment of which was a sash worn baldric-wise across the breast.<sup>15</sup>

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15. See Richard Barber, The Knight and Chivalry (1970; Sphere, 1974), pp. 339-44. That this order and its attributes were known in Spenser's time, see Selden, pp. 369-70 and Segar, pp. 99-102.

On the basis of these connections it may be that Spenser's contemporaries did not view the Garter's eponymous emblem as standing apart from the cingulum group, but rather took its place among them as primus inter pares.

As we have seen, the circular, binding quality of the cingulum gave rise to its being interpreted as indicative of the unity and integrity of the knight and the institution of knighthood. More detailed allegorical explanations of the cingulum were sometimes given. For instance, John Ferne develops his out of the normal basic meaning:

Very aptly is this girdle ... added to the ornament of a Knight, as a signe of his degree, since that it is expedient to a man, that taketh in hand any businesse of difficultie ... to gird his loines ... The girdle then is a signe of labor businesse, not of sloth and effeminate wantonnes. 16

One suspects that Ferne is drawing additionally on the symbolism of Ephesians, Chapter Six, commented on in Chapter Four of the present work. His "gird his loins" recalls the Pauline injunction, "and your loines gird about with veritie". Other interpretations remain predominantly unreligious; Segar derives his from secular scripture:

the lawe Civill seemeth to note that the girdle signified administration or dignitie.  
(p. 61)

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16. John Ferne, The Blazon of Gentry (1586), p. 109.

But although Ferne, Segar, and others embellish the basic meaning of the cingulum, they have no lasting effect on it. The cingulum militare remained in general a symbol of knighthood itself.

The one non-chivalric meaning that does persist is chastity. In Christine de Pisan's Ordene de Chevalerie, Saladin is instructed,

Sire, by that girdle is signified that your  
pure flesh, your loins, your whole body you  
must keep absolutely as in virginity. 17

This tradition remained strong long after Spenser's day.

The eighteenth-century herald John Anstis still interprets the cingulum thus in his essay on the origins of the Order of the Bath.<sup>18</sup> And Jean de Carthenay gives some idea of the literary uses of the combination of the military girdle and the girdle of chastity in The Wandering Knight. His misguided hero is initially armed with "a Cinture ... termed Intemperance". When

17. Christine de Pisan, L'Ordene de Chevalerie, ed. F.S. Ellis (1893):

Sire, par cheste chainturete,  
Est entendu que vo car nete,  
Vos rains, vos cors entirement  
Devez tenir tout firmement  
Aussi com en virginitie,

18. John Anstis, Observations introductory to an Historical Essay upon the Knighthood of the Bath (1725), p. 80: "His white Girdle or Belt, represents the Vertue of Chastity, not in Opposition to Marriage, but to impure and criminal Love, which Knights ought particularly to detest, as being the avow'd Guardians of female Vertue and Honour".

he turns to God and repentance, he is re-equipped with "the well-befitting and graceful Cinture of Chastity".<sup>19</sup> In this example, the two traditions, the cingulum as an emblem of knighthood and the girdle as representing chastity, are combined in a manner that foreshadows Spenser's usage.

## iii

Like Carthenay, Spenser uses the cingulum militare, a decisive feature of the knight's equipment, to demonstrate the difference between good and evil. However, Spenser does so, not by a physical substitution like Carthenay, but by playing on the various words for cingulum and the various ways in which this garment could be worn. He divides the binding garments into two groups: baldrics and belts. Three knights or warriors wear the cingulum as a baldric: Prince Arthur, Britomart, and Belphebe. And they are contrasted with three wearing belts.

The greatest baldric in the poem is, of course,  
that worn by Prince Arthur:

Athwart his brest a baudrick brave he ware,  
That shynd, like twinkling stars, with stons  
most pretious rare.  
(I.vii.29.8-9)

19. Jean de Carthenay, The Wandering Knight: His Adventurous Journey, tr. A.J.H[ammer] (1889), pp. 14 and 222. This is a translation of a fuller edition (1572) than that used in the English translation of 1581, edited by Dorothy Atkinson Evans (see Chapter One, n. 21).

The position of this description is significant. It is placed in Canto Seven at the beginning of the second half of the first book. It is the occasion on which Una, travelling with the Red Cross Knight's abandoned armour, meets Prince Arthur. Thus located, it parallels the description of the enchanter Archimago in the first canto, whom Una meets with the Red Cross Knight. Comparing the two descriptions, we notice that Archimago also wears a cingulum:

At length they chaunst to meet upon the way  
 An aged Sire, in long blacke weedes yclad,  
 His feete all bare, his beard all hoarie gray,  
 And by his belt his booke he hanging had;  
 (I.i.29.1-4)

Archimago's belt contrasts with Arthur's baldric. The contrast is heightened, and to some extent comes alive, when we consider the items suspended from each cingulum. From Arthur's baldric,

his mortall blade full comely hong  
 In yvory sheath, ycarv'd with curious slights;  
 (I.vii.30.6-7)

Prince Arthur's sword, as I suggested in Chapter Three, may be interpreted with St Paul as "the sword of the Spirit, which is the worde of God" (Eph. 6.17). If Arthur possesses the Spirit, then it is only fitting that Archimago should have hanging at his side a "booke". From his cingulum is suspended the physically present Letter; the distinction recalls St Paul's words, "for the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3.6). The contrast contributes to our perception of Prince Arthur as a Christ-like rescuer,





temperate soul in Book Two is Maleger, the leader of the "monstrous rabblement" attacking the House of Alma. His description answers Belphoebe's at all points: he carries a "bended bow" (II.xi.21.1) and has "many arrowes under his right side" (II.xi.21.2). However his are headed with flint and dyed with blood. His clothing also recalls Belphoebe's:

All in a canvas thin he was bedight  
(II.xi.22.6)

Maleger's "canvas thin" parodies Belphoebe's "thin weed" of "silken Camus". But again a specific difference lies in the means by which they are girded: Belphoebe wears a "golden bauldricke", whereas Maleger's rags are tied with "a belt of twisted brake" (II.xi.22.7). Again, baldric and belt are contrasted, with the belt emerging as the attribute of evil. And we may note that in the battle before Alma's House, Maleger's adversary is the baldric-wearing Prince Arthur.

We can have no doubt that Britomart wears the cingulum militare; nor that Spenser is aware of the chivalric significance of this garment. The cingulum is part of the armour she purloins from King Ryence's church when she assumes the role and costume of a knight. The first specified item she takes is the "brave bauldrick" (III.iii.59.9); and although we have to wait two books before her adversary appears, our expectations of a contrasted cingulum are not disappointed. Radigund wears,



her Cemitare ... tide,  
 With an embrodered belt of mickell pride;  
 (V.v.3.4-5)

As with the moon symbol common to both these female warriors, the general similarity serves to draw our attention to crucial differences: Britomart's baldric, the cingulum she shares with Belphoebe and Prince Arthur, contrasts with Radigund's belt.

There is only one other use of the word "baldric" in The Faerie Queene. When Astraea leaves the unjust earth, she retires to "heavens bright-shining baudricke" (V.i.11.7). Although distant from the oppositions listed above, there may yet be a faint contrast. In the "Mutabilitie Cantos" Astraea walks with August in the procession of the months; and they are preceded by an ireful July bearing a sickle "under his belt" (VII.vii.36.9). Astraea and August are associated with the Saturnine world of peace and plenty; July with the usurping Jove. The opposition of Astraea retiring to the baldric at the end of the Saturnine age and July with his belt is faint, but it may be intended.

Excluding the last, highly tentative example, we may conclude that Spenser uses the various forms of the cingulum militare to convey the contrasts and oppositions between characters. In the cases of Arthur, Britomart, and Belphoebe the baldric is a prominent part of the overall contrast. In considering these examples we have noted all the baldrics and almost all the

binding garments in The Faerie Queene; the most significant omission is that of Florimell's girdle.

iv

At first sight Florimell's cestus seems to have little in common with either the exchanged emblems of knighthood or the cingulum militare. However, the cestus follows the pattern established by the emblems of knighthood: it is appropriated by an unworthy imitation and is returned to its true owner at the spousals tournament. In this way its adventures recall those of Guyon's horse, the shield used by Arthegall, and the armour Braggadocchio wears. And its relationship with these emblems of knighthood is cemented by the chivalric connotations it has gathered as a result of the circumstances in which it is lost, found, worn and fought over. Satyrane's wearing of the cestus links it with the cingulum militare.

These latent chivalric connotations are rendered more active by the close resemblance between the cestus and the Garter. The garter-emblem, originally a purely personal attribute like the cestus, is transformed by its context into a chivalric symbol of the highest honour and virtue. The sense of transformation is stressed in the accounts of the Order of the Garter's origins. Sir William Segar states that Edward III first wore the garter "about his left legge

for a favour", nothing more. But to quell laughter,

smiling sayd, HONY SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE.  
I will make of it yer it be long the most  
honourable Garter that ever was worne, and  
thereupon instituted the order of the Garter.  
(p. 66)

John Speed is even more aware of the transformation  
being from a meaningless personal object to a recog-  
nisable symbol. He too tells the story of the  
Countess of Salisbury's garter:

whereat the by-standers smiling, he [the king]  
gave the impresse to checke all evill conceits,  
and in golden letters embellished the Garter  
with this French poesie, HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y  
PENSE. 21

For Speed, the conscious addition of the "poesie" or  
verse turns the garter from a favour into something akin  
to an impresa. In The Faerie Queene Spenser uses the  
reference to the loss of the Garter to indicate the  
transformation of Florimell's girdle from an attribute  
of an individual into a chivalric symbol.

v

As with other binding garments, Spenser uses  
different words, apparently synonyms, to convey the  
moral status of the cestus depending on its wearer.  
Normally it is described as a "girdle". But when the  
false Florimell is awarded it, it becomes "that golden

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21. John Speed, The Theatre of ... Great Britain  
(1611), p. 27.



notion that the cestus ever truly belonged to the snowy maiden. But as well as correcting the ownership, Spenser corrects the name of the cestus, from "belt" to "girdle". Puttenham's fine definition of epanorthosis, which he calles "Metanoia or the penitent" aptly applies to Spenser's play on these terms: "we seem to call in our word again and to put in another fitter for the purpose".<sup>22</sup> As Arthegall in the narrative returns the cestus to its true owner, Spenser restores the name of "girdle", taking the cestus from the group of binding garments denoted by the word "belt".

## vi

The prominence of the cestus and the cingulum garments in The Faerie Queene may be foreshadowed in one of the poem's puzzling inconsistencies. Satyrane's tournament, at which the cestus is raised to the status of a relic, is the last occasion on which we see the titular heroes of Book Four, Cambell and Triamond. Or rather, Cambell and Telamond, for so the second name is spelt on the title page to the book. The meaning of the name Triamond is relatively simple; but a widely accepted meaning for Telamond has yet to be proposed.

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22. George Puttenham, Arte of English Poesie, ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1936; reprinted, 1970), p. 215.

Perhaps the most interesting and satisfying interpretation is that of T.P. Roche, who sees its derivation as teleos and mundus, with the meaning "perfect world".<sup>23</sup> This derivation involves a certain amount of letter-changing and its macaronic nature is slightly unsatisfactory. A simpler alternative is the all Greek telamon. Here only the addition of a final "d" is required. The word's meaning, a belt or baldric supporting a shield, is particularly apt for the cestus dominated events of the tournaments of Books Four and Five. In this interpretation, the title page's variation on the knight's name would announce the significance of the baldrics and the girdle; and through the symbolism of the cingulum militare, of the chivalric theme running through these books.

### Section Three: Marinell's Tournament

#### i

The constitution and values of chivalry are explored throughout The Faerie Queene. But this theme is distilled and concentrated at the two tournaments, chivalric focal-points in real-life too. They present the discussion of knighthood in complementary halves:

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23. The Kindly Flame, pp. 16-17.

Satyrane's tournament demonstrates chivalry's flaws as perceived in the poem; and the way in which these may be corrected is presented at Marinell's.

The transfers of attributes described in the earlier sections of this chapter utterly dominate Marinell's tournament. The three days of fighting require a mere seven stanzas of description.<sup>24</sup> By contrast, twenty-eight are devoted to the unmasking of Braggadocchio and the return of the emblems of knight-hood. And it is in the actions involving these that the resolution of the theme of chivalry in The Faerie Queene is expressed.

ii

Satyrane's tournament is a concentration of questions inherent but unformulated in The Faerie Queene up to this point. At his event we are faced uncompromisingly with the knowledge that, although there are knights acting in the full spirit of theoretical chivalry, there are also knights of dubious morality undermining that ideal: those whose conduct could be described, with Paridell's, as "kighthood fowle defaced by a faithlesse knight" (III.ix, 1.9). The shambles of Satyrane's tournament sweeps away any pretence that

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24. Whereas at the earlier tournament, thirty-one were needed for a battle of similar duration.



the chivalry of the "heard", those knights who are not patrons of virtue, is founded on the integration of all the virtues, the summa perfectio.

Although the fighting at Satyrane's tournament is indecisive, the cestus competition itself proves only too conclusive. The various knights present their ladies to be judged: but the criterion for judgement is physical attractiveness alone, irrespective of virtue. From the contest the false Florimell emerges victorious. But Britomart, Cambell, and Triamond, the knights who have first choice of her by their success in battle, spurn the prize. Their disdain further distances these titular knights from the others present: after they reject her, the knights of the "heard" instantly erupt in passionate disputes over her possession, and this despite the manifest incontinence displayed by her inability to tie the cestus. The election of the false Florimell exemplifies the debased ideals of the tournament. The knights of the "heard" have fought, not for virtue or honour, but for an easy, empty facsimile, whose fraudulence is barely cloaked with the inessential attributes of the more demanding reality.

Spenser reveals the unworthiness and unfitness of such knights in the resolution of the dispute: the quarrels become so heated that the snowy maiden is allowed to select her own mate. Her fit consort, logically, turns out to be none other than Braggadocchio,

the entirely fraudulent knight. Now reunited, this pair is elevated to become the central, triumphant image of Satyrane's tournament, as Braggadocchio had set out to be in the initial procession. And in their ascendancy they are representative of the corrupt and fraudulent chivalry celebrated there.

Satyrane's tournament is "of beautie and of might" (IV.iv.16.2); in other words, it is a chivalric celebration at which, paradoxically, virtue is irrelevant. The spurious honour gained there is justly awarded to Braggadocchio and to the false Florimell because these two are pure imitations, possessing none of the inner substance of virtue.

### iii

Testimony to the seductive appearance of these imposters is supplied by the ecstatic reaction they provoke at Marinell's tournament: "so feeble skill of perfect things the vulgar has" (V.iii.17.9). Here Braggadocchio reaches the zenith of his power, temporarily able to confront and confound the true Florimell and her spouse, Marinell. Arthegall's action, in revealing the boaster as a "losell" (V.iii.20.6) and as a fraud, provides a resolution for the discussion of chivalry: his judgement reasserts the interdependence of virtue, nobility, and chivalry.

It may help us to understand Marinell's tournament if we consider it in terms of the courtly entertainments of Spenser's day. In the previous chapter I suggested that, although Satyrane's is not really a "balletic" tournament, it should be read in the same manner. Reading Marinell's tournament as though it were also part of the tradition of court entertainments may clarify Spenser's meaning.

To a degree, the tournament is presented in the narrative as part of that tradition. It takes place to celebrate the spousals of Marinell and Florimell, a familiar occasion for such an event.<sup>25</sup> There are "devicefull sights" (V.iii.3.2) and "royall banquets" (3.5), recalling the feasting and magnificent visual spectacles in contemporary accounts of the Elizabethan court. What is more, the knights joust "full rich aguiz'd, / As each one had his furnitures deviz'd" (4.4-5); that is, they enter the lists in the extravagant and fanciful costumes common in the entertainments of the time.<sup>26</sup> The courtly atmosphere thus established is disrupted by Braggadocchio's challenge;

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25. Tournaments formed a regular part of marriage festivities. See Ivan L. Schulze, "Reflections of Elizabethan Tournaments in *The Faerie Queene*, 4.4 and 5.3", *ELH* 5 (1938), pp. 278-84.

26. Our awareness of the nature of these festivities is owing largely to Frances Yates, Roy Strong, and Stephen Orgel, in their works listed in my introduction.

but his banishment is followed by a return to "pleasure and repast" (40.1).

For those involved in the tournament there is no sense in which Braggadocchio's interruption can take its place in the otherwise orderly nature of the celebration. For them, the threat he poses is real enough. But to the reader, the structure they cannot perceive, including Braggadocchio's foiled attack, appears to have affinities with courtly entertainments as they developed in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In both tournaments and masques, the court reflected upon itself and particularly upon its own perfection. It did so by creating worlds analogous to its own in all but the detracting and distracting flaws of reality. The culmination of this idealising genre was in part tragic, as Stephen Orgel has pointed out: in Charles I's reign, the masque-world became such a satisfying and seductive embodiment of the ideal that it supplanted uncompromising reality in the minds of both king and court.<sup>27</sup>

Spenser's poem is itself one of the high-points of this tradition, involving the creation of a faery land which <sup>was to</sup> ~~would~~ condition all subsequent fantasies and allegories of the court. In The Faerie Queene, although we never see ultimate perfection in the

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27. Orgel, The Illusion of Power, pp. 79-89.

union of Gloriana and Arthur, we are occasionally given a foretaste of the order and happiness to come; and one of these occasions is when Marinell and Florimell are reunited at their spousals. Into the perfect world there depicted bursts Braggadocchio, intent on destroying the harmony and concord of the spousals. However, far from undermining the relationship between the tournament and courtly entertainments, his conduct reinforces it: Braggadocchio's role resembles that of an antimasquer. Stephen Orgel, in The Jonsonian Masque, sums up the purpose of the antimasquers in Jonson's Masque of Queenes as "to destroy the festivities and the world of the impending masque" (p. 137). Their "ultimate threat ... is a return to chaos: as always to an Elizabethan the villain is disorder, misrule, Mutabilitie" (p. 134). His definition applies equally to Braggadocchio's role: the boaster is the numerological symbol of the discord and disorder at Satyrane's tournament; and he carries that discord with him, making a near-successful attempt at disrupting the spousals. However, he is more powerful than any of Jonson's antimasquers in that, unlike them, he contrives to penetrate the masque-world, to attack its inhabitants and values.

As has been seen, Braggadocchio's power derives from his appropriation and perversion of symbols; specifically in his being taken for the knight who rescued Marinell. There is also a Jonsonian character

who achieves his power through impersonation, in the same manner as Spenser's Braggadocchio: in Love Restored, Plutus has "stol'n Love's ensigns" and claims to be Cupid, the god of Love; and his impersonation is leading to the corruption of the manners of love and the institution of marriage.<sup>28</sup> Exposing him as a charlatan, Robin Goodfellow makes the same point as Spenser about the mob's credulousness and its consequences:

'Tis you, mortalls, that are fooles; and  
worthie to be such, that worship him: for if  
you had wisdom, he had no godhead. (p. 382)

Like Plutus, Braggadocchio dervies his capacity to confront Florimell from the inability of others to distinguish true from false and to penetrate beyond the external signs to inner qualities.

#### Section Four: Arthegall's Judgement

##### i

Arthegall's speech, in which he confronts Braggadocchio and claims the victory as his own, reveals the extent to which Spenser is concerned at Marinell's tournament with the consonance of symbol and inner

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28. Ben Jonson, ed. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, Vol. 7 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 382. It is interesting to note that Jonson uses the martial metaphor automatically here.









that Braggadocchio has actually borrowed.<sup>30</sup> This second sense appears to be that which is taken up in the rest of the sentence, especially in the final line of the stanza. Arthegall predicts that when Braggadocchio's stolen goods are restored to their true owners, the latter will be disgraced. Understood as a reference to the emblems of knighthood, this is necessarily so; and it is, indeed, what lies in store for the boaster: the forcible removal of the attributes of knighthood must and does involve Braggadocchio's formal disgrace and degradation.

ii

Arthegall's attack goes further than this however. He claims that Braggadocchio's behaviour has undermined "others worth". Understanding how one person's actions undermine the "worth" of another is difficult unless we consider briefly the relationship between chivalry and its emblems.

In his essay Icones Symbolicae, E.H. Gombrich draws on the works of sixteenth and seventeenth-century theoreticians in order to examine the relationship

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30. In this context it may be relevant to note that the crest, of which the plumes form a prominent part, is seen by Gower as the "token" or sign of a knight (*Confessio Amantis* 5. 6044).

between symbol and that which is symbolised.<sup>31</sup> He deduces that in the Renaissance this relationship was not simply one of "one thing standing for another", as we should now roughly define allegory and its more transient counterpart, metaphor. The higher value placed on the symbol in the Renaissance he ascribes to the effect of two traditions. To explain the first Gombrich summarises Christophoro Giarda's account of the Christian origin of this mysterious language: according to Giarda, all knowledge was engraved in the language of symbolism "before the Flood on two indestructible pillars, from which the Egyptians derived it; they in their turn, taught it to the Greeks. Thus the language of symbolism is as directly derived from God as is the language of the Scriptures" (pp. 149-50). The effect of this theory is to give symbolic utterance an authority independent of the writer or artist employing it: not only does it have the venerability of age, but it also has the unassailable dignity of being the prelapsarian mode for the expression of all knowledge.

A similarly exalted status for symbolism was accorded in the second of these traditions. Because of the hierarchical theory of the Neoplatonists, analogical symbolism, the representation of "like through

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31. In Symbolic Images, pp. 123-95.

like" (p. 152), implies an affinity beyond that created in the mind of man:

The Universe in this conception is a vast symphony of correspondences in which each level of existence points to the level above. It is by virtue of this interrelated harmony that one object can signify another and that by contemplating a visible thing we can gain insight into the invisible world. (p. 152)

Again the implication of this theory is that symbols possess a value independent of the symbolic writer or artist. He does not invent their meaning or significance; that meaning is inherent in them and the artist merely discovers and uses it. In literature, therefore, allegory and metaphor are not merely figures of speech: they are an expression and utilisation of the underlying structure of the universe. In both Neoplatonic and Christian theories the symbol has an independent reality and meaning.

### iii

Spenser's tournaments present the perversion of symbols. Those attributes and emblems intended to express virtue and chivalry have been appropriated by characters who undermine good. Given, in Gombrich's phrase, the blurred "rational distinction between symbol and reality" (p. 155), such perversion attacks more than the success of the tournaments, but strikes at the harmony and order of the "vast symphony of correspondences" which is the universe of The Faerie Queene.

The perversion of the symbol is an attack on Spenser's mode of writing and on his conception of the underlying structure of the world. The theft of the attributes of knighthood thus possesses far greater significance than is usually allowed; and this explains Spenser's concentration on their return to worthier owners at these tournaments.

The institution of chivalry is, in a sense, an image of the perfect society, as we saw at the beginning of the previous chapter. The knight is also the image of a perfect man. The dishonest use of chivalry's symbols detracts from the institution, challenging both it and the things it symbolises. Spenser has chosen to present the perversion of symbols through Braggadocchio's assault on chivalry because this institution's peculiar nature brings out particularly clearly the independence of symbols.

With most forms of symbolic expression the artist has total control over that which is symbolised; and this for the simple reason that they exist almost exclusively in works of art. But in certain instances this is not the case; and in these the independent reality and authority of symbolic language is more definite. Like monarchy, another of Spenser's chief concerns, chivalry is an institution involving the penetration of symbolism into real life. When, for instance, the monarch appears bearing crown and sceptre

he is the living emblem of himself and of his office. Similarly the knight possesses attributes alluding to his status; and that status, at least in theory, is not merely social and political, but spiritual and moral.

Beyond his fictive world the poet has no control over the veracity of these living emblems. A bad monarch still carries the symbols of justice, peace, and divine sanction. But bad monarchs bring the institution into disrepute, damaging the integrity of the ideal. And it is in this potential damage that the reason for Spenser's concern lies. In his poem he instructs us of the need to restore the consonance of the moral qualities of a man and the possession of the attributes and emblems of knighthood.

In the course of his career, Braggadocchio develops into the supreme exemplar of the unworthy knight. From the outset he is a vehicle for satire on contemporary chivalry and nobility. When he acquires Guyon's arms he immediately sees the opportunities thus presented; and presented, we note, through the less than rigorous standards of his fellows:

He gan to hope, of men to be receiv'd  
 For such, as he him thought, or faine would bee:  
 But for in court gay portance he perceiv'd,  
 And gallant shew to be in greatest gree,  
 Eftsoones to court he cast t'avaunce his first  
degree.  
(II.iii.5.5-9)

From his entry Braggadocchio is associated with that which Spenser sees as the chief danger for chivalry:

the acceptance of outward show as the test for knight-hood. At Marinell's tournament Braggadocchio comes close to success in his attempt to be accepted as representative of chivalry; the result of permanent acceptance of the boaster and the false Florimell as "perfect things" (V.iii.17.9) by the vulgar crowd would be to achieve the destruction of chivalry through a redefinition of its values in their favour.

## iv

In the context of this potential perversion of the institution by impersonation, we may understand Arthegall's accusation that Braggadocchio "others worth with leasings doest deface" (V.iii.20.8). By using the word "deface" Arthegall is continuing the metaphor linking a man's honour with his shield, his "honours stile". Yet it is difficult to see how Braggadocchio's lies, as "leasings" is normally glossed, can have this effect. However, Spenser may intend a pun in "leasing"; this word has the alternative meaning of gleaning or the gathering up of scraps.<sup>32</sup> Taken in this way, Arthegall's accusation develops his indictment of Braggadocchio for the damage caused by his impersonation of a knight: the armour, weapons, and

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32. OED Lease v<sup>1</sup> 1.



emblems of knighthood he has gleaned along the way to the tournament have had the effect noted above, of undermining the institution and those within it.

Arthegall's speech can be seen, in a sense, as the moral sentence or explicative verse to the emblematic tournament discussed in this chapter. His words conspicuously comment on the symbolic function of the equipment of the knight. Fittingly, this most explicit recognition of chivalric symbolism is followed by Braggadocchio's degradation, a fictional version of the most potent use of such symbolism in the world outside The Faerie Queene.

CONCLUSION

## i

At first sight, the subject of martial and chivalric symbolism in The Faerie Queene may seem irredeemably by-the-way. Or perhaps even worse, it may seem factitious. And even if its existence is granted, one might initially question whether it is worth discussing a species of symbolism founded on the apparently recondite arts of heraldry and chivalry. The foregoing chapters have, I hope, provided answers to these objections.

The many examples drawn from accounts of Elizabethan pageantry and ceremonial should indicate the pervasiveness of martial and chivalric symbolism in Spenser's world. In particular, the court (to which The Faerie Queene is itself addressed) employed this symbolism in order to convey its authority and right; and beyond this, to dramatise its own higher qualities and perfections. The ideal world of knighthood offered the court an image of itself in which its honour, brilliance, and predestined success were celebrated, freed by the chivalric metaphor from the nagging doubts of everyday life.

The visual imagery employed in the various courtly entertainments was expressive as well as

decorative. This symbolism, which Spenser reproduces verbally, constituted a subtle language of which we have been, until recently, largely unaware. And we ignore it to our detriment: when Spenser describes the device on a shield, he speaks to his contemporaries in a language with which they were familiar in the world beyond the poem. To the twentieth-century mind the language of martial and chivalric signs may seem abstruse and unfamiliar. But this is an anachronistic response to one of the sixteenth century's most pervasive kinds of visual symbolism.

ii

There can be little doubt as to the pervasiveness of martial and chivalric symbolism in the courtly literature of the time. The reader of such works as the Arcadia cannot but be struck by the frequency of references to chivalric and heraldic conventions and to specific devices and coats-of-arms. And the similar presence of such elements in the Arthurian romances, and in Tasso and Ariosto, confirms that Spenser and Sidney, in endowing the knight and his attributes with symbolic functions, were composing within an established literary tradition. The genre of epic-romance, with its inevitable descriptions of armour and battles, was regarded as eminently suited to the expression of

meaning through symbolism and allegory. Fulgentius's interpretation of the Aeneid makes this point for the classics; Fornari's allegorical commentary and the notes appended to Harington's translation of the Orlando furioso confirm that the moderns, no less than the ancients, were thought by some to be using the genre in this way.

It may be argued that the knowledge required to make sense of this symbolism was possessed by few. However, the existence of martial and chivalric symbolism and of references to the theory and laws of the art of blazon and of chivalry in the drama of the day argues that a far larger number of people than might be supposed were capable of recognising and responding to such allusions. In the first chapter I gave the examples of Edward II and Pericles as plays in which an awareness of tournament conventions is drawn upon. Even more persuasive is the instance of Cynthia's Revels, which contains jokes relying on the audience's possession of quite detailed knowledge of heraldic terminology and theory. Cupid tells Mercury that he will describe the ladies of the court as they pass by:

Ile helpe to paint them.

MER. What! lay colour upon colour? that affords  
but an ill blason.

CUP. Here comes mettall to helpe it, the ladie  
ARGURION.

II.iii.158-62<sup>1</sup>

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1. Jonson, ed. Herford and Simpson, Vol. 4, p. 75.

Here one needs to know the heraldic meanings of "colour" and "mettall" and to be aware of the convention forbidding coats-of-arms in which a device of one "colour" is placed in a field of another.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, Cynthia's Revels was written for the Children of the Chapel and so probably for a relatively courtly audience. Nevertheless Jonson's public was probably much the same as Spenser's on this occasion.

### iii

As regards The Faerie Queene, the peripheral nature of martial and chivalric symbolism should by now seem more apparent than real. Study of this symbolism has, perhaps unexpectedly, led to some of the central issues of the poem: for example, to the role and interpretation of Prince Arthur through his armour, to the individual Christian's relationship with Christ through the transformations of his arms, and to the nature of true Temperance through the battle over Guyon's body.

More particularly, it has been seen that the type of symbolism studied has led, time and again, to the poem's praise of Queen Elizabeth's ideal self and has enabled us to see more clearly the ways in which

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2. This is a convention which Spenser breaks, perhaps deliberately, in describing Braggadocchio's shield (V.iii.14.9).

this praise functions in The Faerie Queene. For example, it has enabled us to make greater sense of the references to the Trojan legend, establishing the confrontation between Britomart and Arthegall as a version of the greatest of all conflicts, that between Hector and Achilles. Perceiving Spenser's heroes in this light heightens and illuminates the concord reached through their betrothal and conveys Spenser's response to the harmony created by Queen Elizabeth, their ultimate offspring in the fiction of the poem. Through his use of the Trojan myth, evoked in part through martial symbolism, Spenser takes this harmony from its circumscribed historical position and endows it with universal implications.

In the two tournaments we may also begin to see meaning as a result of considering the emblems of chivalry present in them. Both employ the symbolism of the Order of the Garter and should, perhaps, be seen as occasions when two forms of knighthood, the imperfect reality and the perfect ideal, are opposed. At the first, false knights usurp the position, status, and attributes of the ideal; at the second, the representatives of a reformed, true, and virtuous chivalry are triumphant, exposing the imposters and renewing the value and meaning of the abused emblems of their order. This interpretation must remain tentative, because of the poem's unfinished state. Yet it is worth considering, not least because it makes sense, perhaps for



the first time, of the relationship between these two chivalric events.

iv

Considering The Faerie Queene in the light of martial and chivalric symbolism has inevitably involved implicit judgements on other questions concerning the reading of this poem. Two of these should, perhaps, be mentioned briefly.

Firstly, and more obviously, this dissertation has added to the areas of reference established by previous symbolic and iconographic studies of the poem. Perhaps most interestingly, this new area of reference is in some ways popular as opposed to scholarly. I have suggested that Spenser draws on a symbolic language readily understood by his contemporaries. This is not to deny the relevance of more recondite knowledge to The Faerie Queene; but it does imply that the view of Spenser as the poet of the mysteries should be tempered by an awareness of Spenser as a poet employing the common currency of chivalry and heraldry.

The study of martial and chivalric symbolism also opens sections of The Faerie Queene to symbolic reading which have previously been left to one side. The results of these studies have reinforced the message of much recent Spenser criticism, that we must add an imaginative, visual element to our ways of reading



this poem. There are those who feel that such readings lead away from the text and sometimes impose upon it. And that this can indeed be the case I have demonstrated in Chapter Four. But properly and warily conducted, the study of symbolism in sixteenth-century poetry is closely akin to more obviously language-orientated research: the object is the rediscovery of part of the spectrum of meaning and allusion in the language used by a writer. For example, to most twentieth-century readers, a two-edged sword is a two-edged sword, tout court. But to their sixteenth-century counterparts, such a weapon would immediately call to mind St Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelations: "for the worde of God is ... mightie, and sharper than anie two edged sworde" (Heb. 12.4). We have forgotten many of these connotations in the intervening centuries. The study of this kind of symbolism in literary works is the attempt to recapture part of the full sense of the words on the page.

## v

My subject has led to an emphasis on the symbolic qualities of The Faerie Queene. This is not to deny the fundamental importance of the poem's plot and narrative. But it is to stress that the normal, novelistic ways of reading we have developed must be supplemented by others if we are to partake fully of

this poem's meaning.

In the course of this dissertation I have placed side by side passages from all parts of The Faerie Queene. . There have been purely practical reasons for this: if the example of a passage in Book Six will elucidate Spenser's method in an earlier book, then I have considered the passages in that order. This dissertation has not been cast in the form of a commentary and so I have not felt it necessary to keep strictly in line with the sequential ordering of Spenser's poem.

On a deeper level, however, this method of juxtaposing passages from all parts of The Faerie Queene is founded on the sense that we are expected to read the poem in other ways besides the purely sequential. The most obvious case in which such agile reading is required is that of Book One, in which an understanding of the first canto's encounter with Errour can only come when we have read canto eleven's with the Dragon. Furthermore, an understanding of Prince Arthur's defeat of Orgoglio depends not only on our having read cantos one and eleven, but also on our having experienced the process of re-evaluating and re-interpreting the defeat of Errour, in the light of the later battles. The process of comparing and re-reading parts of Book One, which can only take place after an initial sequential reading to establish the necessary patterns, informs our understanding of the nature of faith and grace; and

through their interrelation, of Holiness itself.

To an extent, the processes I describe are part of our reading of any literary text. But Spenser builds them into his epic more consistently and more expressively than in most other works. Orlando furioso's narrative complexities are part of its joy; the temporal schemes of the Aeneid and Paradise Lost are immensely impressive and contribute to the grandeur of these poems. But Spenser alone makes the process of reading and rereading, in this sense, so integral to the experience of his poem. Perhaps the reader's position is like that of some of the characters in the poem - the Red Cross Knight on the Mount of Contemplation, Arthur and Guyon in Alma's House, Britomart in Merlin's Cave or at Isis Church - who need to read or see the full sweep and conclusion of their histories before the individual quest or adventure can become meaningful.

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